University of Alberta

Sibling Maltreatment: A Narrative Study of the Experience of the Victims

by

Tamara D. Hanoski ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Counselling Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1998

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-34453-3

Canada

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled SIBLING MALTREATMENT: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VICTIMS by TAMARA DAWN HANOSKI in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.

Gretchen C. Hess
Dr. Gretchen Hess (Supervisor)

Dr. Derek Truscott

Jill McClay
Dr. Jill McClay

Date Approved: 24 August 98

Abstract

Although sibling maltreatment has been described as being the most prevalent form of family violence, it is largely ignored or tolerated in our society. Various aspects of the phenomenon have been studied quantitatively, which is helpful in learning about some aspects of the sibling relationship. My aim in this study was to examine the phenomenon qualitatively, in order to provide a descriptive account which captured the meaning and essence of sibling maltreatment. By using a hermeneutic, narrative approach, I was able to provide rich, detailed stories of the experiences of the participants. I was also able to describe the participants' interpretations and the meaning they had attached to these experiences. These detailed accounts of the "story" of sibling maltreatment add depth and understanding to the phenomenon, which provides several counselling implications and areas for further exploration.

Dedication

For Amy, Margaret, Bob, and Jackie
for sharing their lives so openly.

And for all the other siblings in the world
with similar stories to tell.

Acknowledgements

My greatest thanks to my supervisor, Gretchen Hess, who has not only taught me a tremendous amount about the research process, but has been a wonderful source of support. Your encouragement and belief in me inspired me to do my very best.

I would also like to extend my greatest thanks to the other members of my research committee, Jill McClay and Derek Truscott, for their openness and enthusiasm, and the many intriguing questions and comments they have presented.

I would like to thank my family and friends, for their continued support, pride and love.

I would also like to thank Shawn, who remained a steady source of comfort, strength, and encouragement, and whose smile and laughter helped me to see the balance I had to have in my life.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1
    1.1 The Research Question 2
    1.2 Purpose of the Study 3
    1.3 The Significance of the Study 4
    1.4 Overview 5

2. Literature Review 7
    2.1 Prevalence of Sibling Violence 7
    2.2 The Influence of the Sibling Relationship on Development 10
    2.3 Effects of Sibling Maltreatment 12
        2.3.1 Positive effects of sibling maltreatment 12
        2.3.2 Negative effects of sibling maltreatment 13
    2.4 Definitions 17
        2.4.1 Definitions of "conflict" and "rivalry" 17
        2.4.2 Definitions of "aggression," "violence," and "physical abuse" 18
        2.4.3 Definition of "emotional abuse" 19
    2.5 Causes of Sibling Maltreatment 20
        2.5.1 Characteristics and temperament of the siblings 20
        2.5.2 The parents' role in sibling maltreatment 23
        2.5.3 The emotional climate of the family 26
    2.6 Treatment and Intervention Strategies 27
    2.7 Previous Qualitative Research 28
    2.8 The Current Study 29

3. Method 30
    3.1 Research Design 30
        3.1.1 Hermeneutic approach 31
        3.1.2 Narrative approach 32

3.2 Participants 34
3.3 Procedure: Data Collection and Data Analysis 37
3.4 Trustworthiness 43
3.5 Ethical Considerations 46

4. Data Analysis 48
- 4.1 The Narratives 49
  - 4.1.1 My own story 49
  - 4.1.2 Amy's story 54
  - 4.1.3 Margaret's story 67
  - 4.1.4 Bob's story 80
  - 4.1.5 Jackie's story 90
- 4.2 The Meta-Story 102
  - 4.2.1 Thematic analysis and presentation of exemplars 102
    - 4.2.1.1 Definition of maltreatment as "abuse" 102
    - 4.2.1.2 The one-sided aspect of the maltreatment and the futility of efforts to defend oneself 105
    - 4.2.1.3 Avoidance as a method of coping 107
    - 4.2.1.4 The development of independence 108
    - 4.2.1.5 Parents were unavailable to help with the abusive situation 109
    - 4.2.1.6 Maintenance of the sibling relationship into adulthood 112
    - 4.2.1.7 Superficial adult relationships with their siblings 113
    - 4.2.1.8 Attempts to come to terms with the abuse 114
    - 4.2.1.9 Issues of blame 116
    - 4.2.1.10 Questioning "why" 119
    - 4.2.1.11 Competitiveness and jealousy 120
    - 4.2.1.12 Ramifications of the abuse 121
    - 4.2.1.13 Loyalty to the perpetrating sibling 123
  - 4.2.2 Paradigm cases 125

4.2.2.1 Amy 126
4.2.2.2 Margaret 127
4.2.2.3 Bob 129
4.2.2.4 Jackie 130
4.2.3 Unique individual experiences 132

5. Discussion 137
5.1 Main Research Findings 137
5.2 Implications For Counselling 141
5.3 Limitations to the Current Study 144
5.4 Directions for Future Research 145
5.5 Conclusion 147

References 149
Appendix I: Information Sheet 155
Appendix II: Informed Consent Form 156
Appendix III: Demographic Sheet 157
Appendix IV: Conflict Tactic Scale 158
Appendix V: Interview Guide 159
Appendix VI: Corroborating Interview Letter 160
Appendix VII: Ethical Review Form 161

Chapter One

Introduction

> A minor argument would erupt into violence when I wouldn't do what my brother wanted me to or I wouldn't agree with his opinion. I was shaken, hit, kicked, and slapped. I was never badly hurt, but the level of my brother's rage was such that I was always afraid of it... (Wiehe, 1990, p.12)

> My brother and sister would hold me down and tickle me until I cried. They considered this play and would usually do it when my parents were gone. They would finally let me go and then laugh because I was a "crybaby"... (Wiehe, 1990, p.14)

> I was constantly being told how ugly, dumb, unwanted I was. Already about two years old I was told, "No one wants you around. I [my sister] wish you were dead..." ...I believed *everything* my sister ever told me–that I was ugly, dumb, homely, stupid, fat–even though I always was average weight. I felt no one would ever love me. When you're little, you believe everything you're told–it can last a lifetime. (Wiehe, 1990, p. 35.)

Although sibling violence has been cited as being the most prevalent form of violence in the family, it is also the least studied and the least understood (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy & Forehand, 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Many people tend to dismiss this type of violence, considering it functional behavior for brothers and sisters. However, several authors believe that the relationship that one has with his/her sibling has a tremendous impact on his/her social, cognitive, and emotional development, and that a violent or abusive relationship may put a child at risk for developmental difficulties, such as depression and anxiety (Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Graham-Bermann, Cutler, Litzenberger, & Schwartz, 1994; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992; Wiehe, 1990), as well as peer rejection, delinquency, and future aggressive behavior (Dunn, 1988; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Vespo, Pedersen, & Hay, 1995; Volling & Belsky, 1992). These negative effects of sibling maltreatment need to be investigated and explored further, in order to determine their importance and impact on those who have experienced this phenomenon.

The Research Question

Most of the research that has been conducted in the area of sibling maltreatment has been quantitative in nature and has examined such aspects of the phenomenon as the prevalence of sibling violence (Straus et al., 1980), the effects of age, sex, or space between siblings (Montemayor & Hanson, 1985), parental intervention (Dunn & Munn, 1986; Volling & Belsky, 1992), or the contrast between sibling relationships and other family relationships or peer relationships (Vespo et al., 1995). These studies have been helpful in identifying the extremely high prevalence of sibling violence and in describing the various factors that play a role in this phenomenon. However, findings from these studies provide only a superficial description of the experience of sibling maltreatment and do not provide the detailed information that is necessary to fully understand the meaning of such an experience.

One area that has received only limited attention is the perceptions and experiences of the victims of sibling maltreatment. Although some researchers have begun to examine this area qualitatively in recent years, more exploration is needed (Crane, 1997; Wiehe, 1990). The study of this phenomenon lends itself well to qualitative inquiry, as qualitative researchers strive to gather data that will describe an experience in depth, from the perspective of those who have experienced it. I hoped that by conducting the current study, I would be able to contribute insight and awareness into the world of those who have experienced maltreatment from a sibling. Thus, the research questions which guided me in this project were as follows: (1) How would one describe the experience of being the victim of physical and/or emotional maltreatment from a sibling? And (2) How do the victims of sibling maltreatment perceive and make sense of the experiences they had with their siblings?

Purpose of the Study

Since the point of view of the victim has not been studied extensively, the current study was mainly an exploratory one, and I hoped to learn how those who are involved in the phenomenon perceive their experiences. When I began the study, I did not know if the participants would have negative or positive views of their experiences and whether they considered their sibling relationship to have been influential in their development. Thus, my aim in doing this study was to find out what these experiences meant to the victims, and their beliefs and feelings about the phenomenon.

In order to get a complete picture of the experience of sibling maltreatment, I used the narrative method of analysis. According to Berger (1997), one of the most important and universal ways of learning about oneself is through the use of narratives. Berger states that narratives are a part of everyday life, and can be seen in such forms as lullabies, fairy tales, novels, movies, and television programs. They are also one of the most universal ways in which people describe and make sense of their experiences, as they put events together into meaningful wholes (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993). Thus, people are more like painters than photographers, in that they have a role in creating and interpreting the meaning of their experiences, rather than simply being passive recipients of events that occur (Ochberg, 1996).

I also approached this study from a hermeneutic perspective, which is the study of the interpretive understanding, or meaning, of certain experiences (Patton, 1990). Polkinghorne (1988) states that narrative is a form of hermeneutic expression, whereby one's experiences are understood and made meaningful by creating a story out of events that have occurred during one's life. Thus, by using a hermeneutic, narrative approach, I hoped to be able to describe and interpret the experiences of the participants in a way that would capture the essence of their life-world. I also wanted the narrative to be detailed enough to show how each participant had made sense of the experiences that he/she had with his/her siblings. I hoped that this exploratory study would lead to new insights and findings that could be explored further or confirmed in future studies.

The Significance of the Study

My main goal in conducting this study was to provide detailed descriptions of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment from the victims' point of view, so that the importance and meaning of the experience could be understood by others. Other types of violence, such as spousal or child abuse, have been recognized by researchers and psychologists as being detrimental to one's development and as having long-term negative effects, such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, and the development of learned helplessness (Bennet, 1990; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980). However, Wiehe (1990) believes that sibling maltreatment is unlike these other forms of family violence because it is not recognized as a form of abuse. Thus, the possible devastating effects of such treatment are often minimized or ignored, which can further traumatize the victim. Gelles and Cornell (1985) write that the lack of attention to sibling violence has led many to believe that it is not a serious issue and that child and spousal abuse are much more common and harmful.

As previously stated, studies on the prevalence of sibling maltreatment have shown that it is the most common form of family violence and that the negative effects of such maltreatment can be just as detrimental as other forms of family violence (Brody et al., 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Straus et al., 1980). Gelles and Cornell (1985) write that sibling violence occurs so frequently that people do not even recognize it as being violent or inappropriate. However, many of these violent acts can be extremely harmful and would be considered a criminal act if carried out by a person who was not a sibling (Straus et al., 1980). Many people in society accept this negative behavior from their children and believe that such maltreatment is inevitable in the context of the sibling relationship. Although conflict between siblings may be unavoidable, the violent and abusive manner in which some siblings resolve these disputes is not inevitable (Straus et al., 1980).

However, the question remains as to how the victims of such maltreatment feel about being treated this way. Researchers in the area of sibling violence have made an assumption that victims of sibling maltreatment experience similar negative effects as those who have experienced other forms of family violence. Although this is a logical assumption, there have been very few studies conducted which explore whether this assumption holds true. Researchers have begun to examine the impact of sibling maltreatment, by qualitatively examining the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Crane, 1997; Wiehe, 1990). I hoped to examine this further and learn from the victims of sibling maltreatment whether they feel that they have suffered negative effects from their relationship with their sibling.

Findings from previous qualitative studies have indicated that there are many negative effects that occur as a result of sibling maltreatment (Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Perry et al., 1992; Straus et al., 1980; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Wiehe, 1990). However, there are limitations to these studies, and I began the current study without assuming that my participants have had the same experience as those in previous studies. Thus, I opened myself to the possibilities. One of these possibilities may have been that the participants consider sibling maltreatment to be "normal" and acceptable, in which case the issue is inconsequential and insignificant. However, it may also have been the case that they have experienced negative effects and consequences, in which case more research into this phenomenon would be necessary. This study was one of exploration, and I began with the hope and expectation that the answers would become clearer as the journey continued.

Overview

In the next chapter, previous research that has been done in the area of sibling maltreatment is described. I have included sections on the prevalence of sibling violence, the effect one's siblings have on his/her development, the effects of sibling conflict, definitions, possible causes of sibling maltreatment, treatment and intervention strategies, and previous qualitative research. In Chapter Three, the methods used in the study are presented, which includes a description of hermeneutics and narrative analysis. The procedures I followed throughout the project are also outlined. In Chapter Four, I have presented the narratives for myself and the four participants. I also conducted a group comparison between narratives in order to find common themes of the experience, as well as exemplars and paradigm cases of the experience of sibling maltreatment. In the final chapter, I have described the findings, the implications of the findings, limitations to the study, and areas that are in need of further investigation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the previous research that has been conducted in the area of sibling violence. Several previous studies have been focused on such aspects of sibling maltreatment as: the prevalence of sibling abuse (Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985; Roscoe, Good win, & Kennedy, 1987; Steinmetz, 1977; Straus et al., 1980), the influences that a sibling has on one's development (Bank, 1992; Cicerelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994), and the positive and negative effects that can occur through siblings' disputes (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Wiehe, 1990).

Many of the previous findings in the area of sibling maltreatment are confusing and inconclusive, due to the fact that there is a great deal of inconsistency with regards to the terms and definitions that have been used to describe sibling "conflict," " violence," and "abuse" (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996). In order to avoid such confusion, I have provided a section on the definitions for these terms and have described how I will be using them in this study. Following the section on definitions, I have presented one of the main areas of previous research, the causes of sibling conflict or violence. I have also described current ideas on appropriate intervention strategies and treatment programs. The chapter concludes with a description of previous qualitative studies, and a discussion of how my study follows from the previous research.

Prevalence of Sibling Violence

Over the past four decades, child abuse and spousal abuse have been brought into the forefront of public awareness and have become a social problem of high priority (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980). Gelles and Cornell state that so much public and professional attention is being paid to these forms of abuse that people have come to believe that violence towards children or towards one's spouse is the most prevalent and serious type of family violence. However, there are many other types of violence in the home, which are not currently considered to be a form of "abuse". For example, sibling abuse may be so common that it is taken to be a functional aspect of the sibling relationship (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996).

Several researchers claim that sibling abuse is much more common than most people realize (Bryant, 1992) with many researchers holding the belief that sibling violence is *the* most common form of family violence, occurring more frequently than parental child abuse, spousal abuse, or female abuse (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Newman, 1994; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Straus et al., 1980). A few decades ago, child and spousal abuse were kept private and hidden from others. This seems to be the case with sibling abuse today. Thus, maltreatment by one's sibling is not considered to be a serious issue and is ignored or tolerated by many parents and by society (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy, & Forehand, 1992; Felson, 1983; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Newman, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987; Straus et al., 1980). Wiehe (1990) states that as long as this type of maltreatment is considered functional and inevitable, the symptoms will remain unrecognized, and the devastating effects on the victims will be disregarded or minimized.

In their national survey on violence in the family, Straus and colleagues (1980) asked parents to describe the sibling violence that occurred with regards to one of their children. The results indicated that four out of five siblings between the ages of 3 and 17 carried out at least one violent act during a typical year. They also reported that 53 out of 100 participants attacked their sibling in the last year and that 20% of the participants had been "beaten up" at some point in their lives by a sibling.

In another study involving parents, Steinmetz (1977) asked the participants to complete a diary on the conflict resolution tactics of their children. Results indicated high levels of physical violence between siblings, with the parents reporting that a majority of the children in all age groups used physical violence as a means to resolve their disputes with one another. However, there may be limitations to the methods used in these studies due to the reliance on parental reports. Parents may not have observed all incidents of sibling violence or conflict, or they may have over- or under-estimated the seriousness of the conflicts they did observe. It is also possible that the parents' attitudes about the functionality of sibling violence may have caused them to downplay some of the incidences of violence or conflict they observed between their children.

In order to avoid this limitation, later studies examined the prevalence of sibling maltreatment by using children and adolescents as participants. In one study on Grade 7 students, 88% of boys and 94% of girls reported being victims of sibling violence in the last year (Roscoe et al., 1987). In a similar study, Prochaska and Prochaska (1985) conducted a study on Grade 5 students who reported an average of 4.7 fights a day with their siblings. In a study by Katz, Kramer, and Gottman (1992), 90% of school-age children reported antagonism with their sibling and 79% of the students stated that quarrels were an important part of their sibling relationship. Goodwin & Roscoe (1990) conducted another study in which they asked junior and senior high school students to describe their experiences of being either victims or perpetrators of sibling violence. Over 60% of the participants in this study reported being either a victim or a perpetrator. One of the main limitations of these studies is the lack of clear and appropriate definitions for "violence", "fights", "antagonism", and "quarrels", which makes it difficult for the reader to determine what is really being studied and described by the participants.

There have also been some retrospective studies conducted on experiences of sibling conflict or violence. Graham-Bermann and colleagues (1994) asked university students to reflect back on their experiences of being either a victim or perpetrator of sibling violence in childhood or adolescence. The researchers found that 20% of the participants reported high levels of victimization with their sibling, as compared to siblings in other families the participants knew, and 17% of participants stated that they treated a sibling more violently than siblings in other families. An obvious limitation to this study is the question of whether participants were capable of making a comparison between themselves and siblings in other families. As abuse is usually kept hidden and private from others, it is not likely that the participants were aware of the true extent of sibling conflict or violence that existed in other families. Thus, the results from this study may reflect a lack of knowledge of the participants, rather than true levels of violence.

In a recent study by Wilson and Fromuth (as cited in American Psychological Association, 1997), university students filled out questionnaires about themselves and their families with a focus on the verbal and physical aggression that they experienced from various family members. Results indicated that 65% of respondents experienced very severe physical abuse from their sibling and 60% reported inflicting physical abuse on a sibling. Of the 65% that reported being maltreated by a sibling, only 21% considered themselves to have been physically abused. Thus, even though the participants had been kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or choked by their sibling, they did not define this treatment as abusive.

From these results, it appears that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that sibling violence is a serious issue which is extremely common. It is also possible that the prevalence of sibling abuse is being underestimated, as abusive behavior may not be perceived as "abuse" by parents or siblings. More research in the area is necessary, in order to determine the seriousness of this type of maltreatment and the effects this treatment has on the victims.

The Influence of the Sibling Relationship on Development

Stillwell and Dunn (1985) state that 80% of children grow up with siblings and that one's siblings have very strong developmental influences. Although the sibling relationship is the longest familial relationship one will experience in his/her total lifetime, developmental psychologists have only recently begun to recognize the tremendous impact a sibling can have on the development of personality and psychopathology (Bank, 1992; Cicerelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994). As described by Dunn (1984) and Newman (1994), the sibling relationship is the first significant social relationship experienced by a young child and provides the context in which social understanding is initially acquired. Dunn states that siblings provide an opportunity for learning and modeling new behaviors, as well as learning how to understand the feelings, intentions, and needs of other people. Siblings also play a positive role by teaching children about helping behaviors and cooperation, as well as in providing companionship. Sibling relationships can also have a negative influence, in that most siblings engage in aggressive and negative behaviors with one another (Cicirelli, 1995).

Several authors have written that the sibling relationship is one of tremendous emotional power and intimacy, due to the qualities of competitiveness, ambivalence, and emotional understanding that siblings have for one another (Bank, 1992; Dunn, 1988). Due to the fact that siblings have such an intimate understanding of each other, there is extraordinary potential for them to find ways to help or hurt one another. According to Steinmetz (1978) conflicts between siblings are especially intense and severe, as compared to conflicts with people outside of the family. This may be due to the familiarity between siblings, high accessibility, or parental expectations and acceptance of such conflict as normal and inevitable. Thus, the sibling relationship appears to have a great deal of developmental influence, in both positive and negative ways.

Effects of Sibling Maltreatment

Positive effects of sibling maltreatment.

Many people believe that conflict between siblings is not a serious issue and can have positive effects on the children that are involved. Although Prochaska and Prochaska (1985) found that conflict between siblings was very common, they also found that prosocial behaviors occurred at a higher level than conflict behaviors. These researchers concluded that the high level of positive behaviors alleviated the negative effects of conflict. Vandell and Bailey (1992) write that conflict between siblings is an important aspect of the relationship, as it provides a way for the children to differentiate from each other. These authors go so far as to say that a sibling relationship without any conflict would be indicative of developmental problems, with the siblings having a restricted relationship and being too attached to one another.

Many researchers have written about other positive aspects of sibling conflict, such as helping children to feel independent, allowing children to vent harmful feelings, helping siblings to learn the social rules of the family, teaching siblings to problem-solve and negotiate with one another, and helping the children to build a stronger bond with one another (Bennet, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993). Many authors view conflict between siblings as the practice of skills that will be used to handle conflict with friends and schoolmates in the future, by helping them to learn skills of argument and how to take another person's point of view (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Dunn, 1984; Straus et al., 1980). Wiehe (1990) conducted a qualitative study, in which he asked people who felt that they had been abused by a sibling to fill out questionnaires describing their experiences. His participants reported that being victims of sibling abuse helped them in several ways, such as by teaching them to listen to their own children, by leading them to helping professions where they work with family violence, and by helping them to develop a sense of humor and quick wit in order to deal with the verbal abuse they experienced from their siblings.

Negative effects of sibling maltreatment.

Although positive effects of sibling conflict are possible, it is likely that negative effects will occur if sibling conflict is handled inappropriately. For example, if conflict escalates into more violent and abusive behaviors, negative developmental outcomes are more likely than the positive effects that were discussed previously. Thus, although conflict and disputes between siblings may be inevitable, the use of physical force or violence is unnecessary, and can be seriously harmful to the victims of such maltreatment (Cicirelli, 1995; Straus et al., 1980). Developmental difficulties can arise for both the perpetrator and the victim. For example, the perpetrator may experience such negative effects as peer rejection, delinquency, and the maintenance of aggression into adulthood (Dunn, 1988; Volling & Belsky, 1992), while the victim may experience physical injury, poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992; Wiehe, 1990).

One of the most serious outcomes of sibling violence is that hostile acts between siblings can shape aggressive behavior, which may lead both the perpetrator and the victim to become abusive in future relationships (Dunn, 1984; Gully, Dengerink, Pepping, & Bergstrom, 1981; Loeber, Weissman, & Reid, 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978). Mongold and Koski conducted a study (as cited in Herzberger, 1996) in which male college students who admitted to being violent toward a sibling were also found to be more violent toward people outside the family. Herzberger claims that this finding may be due to the fact that the acceptance of an act of violence may lead to a more widespread acceptance of more serious acts of violence. This is similar to the performance of altruistic behaviors (called the "foot-in-the-door" phenomenon) whereby a small act of kindness often leads to larger acts of kindness.

Herzberger (1996) also describes the Cyclical Hypothesis of Abuse and states that a cycle of abuse is perpetuated by the establishment of violent norms within each succeeding generation. Thus, a child who is brought up in an abusive environment may come to accept violence as normal and may carry the abusive behavior into his/her own family. Herzberger states that research results have been mixed with regards to this hypothesis, with a range from 18 to 70% of abused children becoming abusive in later relationships. This discrepancy is due to the different kinds of methodology that have been used (Herzberger, 1996). Thus, although it is possible that violence begets violence, more research on this topic is necessary.

Researchers have described numerous negative effects for the victims of sibling abuse, which tend to be long lasting (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994). In an extensive qualitative study, Wiehe (1990) found that victims' lives are often "scarred", and that many need to undergo psychotherapy in order to deal with the difficulties they are experiencing as a result of sibling physical and emotional abuse (p. 2). Some of the difficulties reported in his study include: being fearful and distrustful of others, having drug or alcohol problems, having relationship problems, repeating the victim role in other relationships, and lacking the ability to be assertive and stand up for oneself. Many of these effects are similar to those that occur from other types of child abuse. Thus, sibling abuse appears to be just as damaging as other forms of family violence (Straus et al., 1980).

Another area which has been neglected in previous research is the effects of emotional abuse or psychological maltreatment by a sibling. Although "mental injury" has been included in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, many parents minimize psychological maltreatment by siblings, attributing it to normal sibling interaction (Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1990). However, it has been found that psychological maltreatment often accompanies physical abuse (Star, Dubowitz & Bush, 1990; Wiehe, 1990). For example, in Wiehe's qualitative study (1990), 78% of respondents reported that they had been emotionally abused by a sibling, and Wiehe found that this type of abuse was a central issue in all other forms of sibling abuse that he investigated.

One of the most negative effects that can occur as a result of emotional abuse is that the victim internalizes the negative messages he/she is receiving and accepts them as if they are true, which can bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy, as well as feelings of despair and a negative view of the self (Herzberger, 1996; Wiehe, 1990). Whipple and Finton (1995) write that since one's siblings serve important functions in one's development, such as reflection of self-appraisal, support in crisis, and socialization (McKeever, 1983), there can be serious developmental difficulties, such as the diminishment of self-esteem, if these appraisals are mainly negative.

Garbarino (1987) and Germain, Brassard, and Hart (1985) state that other negative effects of emotional abuse may include: dysfunctional social relationships, acting out behaviors, somatic symptoms, nightmares, and phobias (as cited in Whipple & Finton, 1995). Some of the effects of emotional abuse are the same as those which occur as a result of other types of abuse, such as depression, feelings of worthlessness, and playing the victim role in other relationships (Whipple & Finton, 1995). Wilson and Fromuth (1997) conducted a study on verbal and physical aggression in the family and reported that a majority of their participants stated that emotional or verbal abuse had more negative effects than physical violence (as cited in Elias, 1997). Participants were also more likely to label emotional maltreatment as "emotional abuse" whereas severe forms of physical violence were not labeled as "physical abuse." Thus, from this study, it seems that the participants believed that emotional maltreatment had more of a negative impact than physical maltreatment.

Wiehe (1990) also stated that emotional abuse is often more destructive than other forms of child abuse, especially since parents accept teasing and verbal insults even more readily than physical violence. Thus, the victim receives the message that this abusive and hurtful behavior is not really abusive, so that the victims come to deny the seriousness of this type of maltreatment. In this scenario, the child is being ridiculed or degraded by a sibling, while the parents, who are the only source of help available to him/her, ignore the abuse. This can lead to serious developmental difficulties, such as the development of learned helplessness (Bennett, 1990; Herzberger, 1996).

The theory of learned helplessness was applied to cases of spousal abuse by Walker (1979). She stated that in cases of spousal abuse, the victim is often left up to his/her own devices for escape, and since the victim often cannot see any way to leave the abusive relationship, he or she will resign him/herself to a life of abuse. Walker states that:

> Repeated batterings, like electrical shocks, diminish the woman's motivation to respond. She becomes passive. Secondly, her cognitive ability to perceive success is changed. She does not believe her response will result in a favorable outcome, whether or not it might. Next, having generalized her helplessness, the battered woman does not believe anything she does will alter any outcome, not just the specific situation that has occurred....She cannot think of alternatives...her sense of emotional well-being becomes precarious. She is more prone to depression and anxiety (pp. 49-50).

Bennett (1990) states that this is very similar to what a child would experience when being abused by a sibling. In fact, he states that it is even more likely that learned helplessness will develop in a child, as he/she does not have the choice to leave the home. Thus, if the child's parents do not intervene on his or her behalf, the child may come to believe that he/she is powerless in the situation and that there is no way to escape the abuse (Bennett, 1990; Gelles, et al., 1985; Herzberger, 1996). The symptoms of learned helplessness can account for many of the negative effects of abuse that were previously discussed, such as depression, anxiety, and poor interpersonal relationships, as well as the inability to find effective solutions to problems, the tendency to give up easily when searching for a solution, lethargy, despair, and hopelessness.

Thus, it appears that there are different effects of sibling violence, some of which are positive, and some of which are negative. It seems that functional sibling conflict can contribute to healthy development, whereas more violent or abusive behavior can be detrimental to one's development. One of the difficulties in determining the impact of violent behavior is the way that the behavior is defined. Definitions have varied among studies, and such terms as "conflict," "rivalry," "aggression," "violence," and "abuse" are often used interchangeably to describe very different sibling behaviors (Graham-Bermann, et al., 1994). Thus, clear definitions of "violence" and "abuse" are necessary in order to differentiate between constructive and destructive forms of sibling conflict.

Definitions

At present, there are no standardized definitions for "aggression," "conflict," "violence," or "abuse," and there is no standard criteria for the use of these terms in surveys or studies (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996). This makes comparison between studies very difficult. Cicirelli (1995) states that definitions vary from culture to culture, as certain behaviors may be acceptable in one culture, but not in another. Furthermore, Herzberger (1996) claims that estimates of the prevalence of violence vary widely, as the estimate depends on how "violence" is defined. Thus, it is very important that sibling maltreatment be defined appropriately.

Definitions of "conflict"and "rivalry".

Wiehe (1990) states that one must be able to differentiate between functional and dysfunctional sibling treatment. In most cases, the term "conflict" has been used to describe the inevitable disputes that occur between siblings (Straus et al., 1980). Cicirelli (1995) describes "conflict" as a social event which involves mutual opposition and disagreement, and actions such as quarreling, fighting, resisting, opposing, denying, objecting, and protesting. He states that conflict will occur when two individuals disagree in their desires or ideas, when the disagreement involves some degree of emotionality, and when the individuals are directly opposing each other. The main differentiating factor for conflict, as opposed to more serious forms of aggression or violence, is that conflict is mutual, whereas aggression is usually unidirectional (Cicirelli, 1995; Katz et al., 1992). According to Vespo and colleagues (1995), conflict occurs routinely, is relatively brief, and can be helpful in developing social problem-solving skills.

Another term which has been used to describe sibling disputes is "sibling rivalry". This term is often used to describe the feelings of jealousy, guilt, rejection, isolation, resentment, and anxiety that often occur for an older sibling when a newborn child is brought into the family (Catiglia, 1989). Leung and Robson (1991) define "sibling rivalry" as competition between siblings for the attention, love, recognition, and affection of the parents. These authors state that sibling rivalry is found in almost all families and that jealousy is a common reaction that is experienced by most children. Rivalry between siblings may continue throughout their relationship, extending into adulthood and old age (Dunn, 1984). As long as sibling rivalry does not escalate into violent or abusive behaviors, which will be defined in the next section, it can help siblings to acquire social, interpersonal, and cognitive skills that will contribute significantly to the healthy development of the child. However, if handled inappropriately, sibling rivalry can be destructive to one's development and can lead to psychological problems later in life (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984).

Definitions of "aggression," "violence," and "physical abuse."

Cicirelli (1995) states that sibling maltreatment exists on a continuum, with the behavior progressing from aggression to violence to abuse as the intensity of the interaction increases. These three terms are different from "conflict", in that disputes that are aggressive, violent or abusive will be prolonged, they will be accompanied by intense affect, and they will involve coercion that is based on a recognized power differential (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Vandell & Bailey, 1992).

"Aggression," "violence," and "abuse" will also be used to describe activities which have a high potential for injuring the victim (Straus et al., 1980). Wiehe (1990) defines physical abuse as willful acts that result in physical injury, such as slapping, hitting, biting, kicking, or more violent behaviors that may include the use of a weapon, such as a stick, bat, gun, or knife. He states that an inherent component of abuse is that these behaviors are used as a means to gain power or control over the victim.

According to Wiehe, perpetrators will use three types of physical abuse. The first of these is common forms, such as hitting, slapping, pushing, hair pulling, punching, scratching, or hitting with objects. The second type is unusual forms, such as excessive tickling. The third type is injurious or life threatening forms, such as seriously beating a sibling or using a weapon.

Whipple and Finton (1995) state that in order to differentiate dysfunctional from functional behavior, one must consider the constancy and intensity of the behavior. Thus, if the behavior occurs at a high level, with a great deal of intensity and emotionality on the part of the victim, it would be considered to be abusive. Wiehe (1990) states that one must also take into account the age appropriateness of the behavior, the purpose of the behavior, and the reactions of the perpetrator. If behaviors are not age appropriate, are done with malicious intent, and are accompanied by inappropriate reactions, such as laughter, then the behavior would be considered to be abusive.

Definition of "emotional abuse."

"Emotional abuse" has been defined as tactics that are perceived to have been used with the intent of degrading, humiliating, or demeaning the victim. This is usually accomplished through verbal means, such as by teasing, insulting, ridiculing, threatening, or intimidating (Cicirelli, 1995; Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1990). Wiehe (1990) states that this type of treatment may also involve the destruction of personal property, exacerbation of a fear, or mistreatment of a pet. He states that verbal abuse is not like "joking", even if it is disguised as such, as it involves a "one-down" relationship, and occurs at the expense of the victim (p. 25). In other words, emotionally abusive incidents will also involve a power differential between the perpetrator and victim, in the same manner as physical abuse.

From the definitions and findings from previous research, it is important to note that some conflict may be inevitable in the context of the sibling relationship.

Definitions are helpful in determining which behaviors would be considered to be constructive, neutral, or destructive. However, the question still remains as to why some siblings engage in destructive violence while others do not.

Causes of Sibling Maltreatment

There are many factors which may have an influence on the quality of sibling relationships. Cicirelli (1995) reported that the following factors contribute to sibling violence: characteristics and temperament of the siblings, treatment by the parents, inappropriate parental interventions, and a negative emotional climate in the family.

Characteristics and temperaments of the siblings.

A great deal of previous research on sibling violence has been concerned with various characteristics of the siblings. For example, many studies have been done to examine the contribution of gender, age, and age spacing on a conflicted sibling relationship. There have been inconclusive results with regards to the effects of gender. Straus and colleagues (1980) state that in their national survey of family violence, girls tended to be more verbal than boys in their disputes with siblings. They were also reported to be less physically violent than boys, although this difference was very slight. Straus and colleagues also found that boys with only sisters tended to be less violent than boys with brothers, and that girls with only brothers were more violent than girls with sisters. From these results, it appears that the presence of male siblings leads to more physically violent behavior in the sibling relationship.

Similar results have been found by other researchers, who state that the most physically violent sibling relationships are those with only boys, but that older brother/younger sister dyads have high levels of physical violence as well (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1990). However, several other studies have yielded results where there were no significant gender differences for violent behavior with a sibling (Abramovitch et al., 1986; Felson, 1983; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Roscoe et al., 1987). Thus, it appears that gender should not be considered to be an essential determining factor in violent sibling relationships, as any gender differences that have been observed have been slight and have not been observed in all studies.

Previous researchers have also found that as siblings get older, violence tends to decrease (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). Steinmetz (1977) reported a higher incidence of sibling violence in families with children under the age of eight. She stated that this result may be due to the fact that younger children have less control over their aggressive impulses. However, some authors state that even though the rate of violence decreases as the children get older, violent interactions still occur at a high rate, and that when they do occur, they are emotionally intense and are usually not resolved appropriately, which can be detrimental for psychological growth (Straus et al., 1980; Vandell & Bailey, 1992).

Goodwin and Roscoe (1990) reported that although negative interactions decreased as their participants got older, the majority of participants were still experiencing extreme violence with a sibling and were at an age where such altercations could cause serious injury. Abramovitch, Pepler, and Corter (1982) suggest that one possibility for the decline in physical violence is that as young people get older, the improvement in their language and cognitive abilities may allow them to replace physical interactions with verbal interactions. Thus, when in conflict with one another, older children may begin to use verbal maltreatment as opposed to physical maltreatment.

With regards to the influence of the age gap between siblings, findings seem to indicate that conflict occurs more frequently with closely spaced siblings than with those with a large age gap (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). Vandell and Bailey (1992) reported that in their study of sibling conflict, participants who had an age gap of six years or more had virtually no violent interactions with each other. They also reported that the most violent sibling relationships were those in which the siblings had an age gap of two to four years. This may be due to higher levels of competition and rivalry that may exist for siblings that are closer in age. However, other researchers have found that age gap does not have a consistent influence on levels of sibling violence (Abramovitich et al., 1982; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Furman & Buhrmeister, 1985; Stoneman, Brody, & McKinnon, 1984).

Another area that has been examined in previous studies is the quality of sibling relationships as compared to the quality of peer relationships. Dunn (1984) found that by middle childhood, physical fights were more common between siblings than between children outside of the family, with 7% of peers and 29% of siblings having physical fights "often", and 32% of peers and 64% of siblings having physical fights "sometimes". Brody, Stoneman, MacKinnon, and MacKinnon (1985) compared the interpersonal interactions between sibling dyads, peer dyads, and peer triads, and found that more interpersonal behavior between siblings was negative than that shown by peers. These differences between siblings and peers may be due to the fact that relationships with peers are more reciprocal and balanced than sibling relationships, which tend to be more hierarchical and unequal (Newman, 1994). Newman also states that sibling relationships are likely to be more violent than peer relationships because siblings do not have the choice to spend time together. There are also inescapable social comparisons made between siblings and competition between siblings is often inevitable. Thus, although sibling and peer relationships have some similarities, there are unique aspects of the sibling relationship that make it likely that children will experience more violence from siblings than from peers.

Another factor which may contribute to sibling maltreatment is the temperament of the children in the sibling relationship. For example, Brody and Stoneman (1987) propose that siblings are at a higher risk for an aggressive sibling relationship when at least one child is highly active or impulsive. This risk would increase if both children were active and impulsive. In support of this hypothesis, Mash and Johnston (1983) conducted a study where siblings who were highly active and impulsive were found to display approximately four times the amount of negative behavior as those siblings in the control group, and approximately twice as much negative behavior as controls when being supervised by their mothers.

Wiehe (1990) has also suggested another aspect of the child's temperament that may play a role in sibling maltreatment. He states that the way some children interact with others may make them prone to becoming victims. Wiehe explains that in his Interactional Theory he is not intending to blame the victim, but simply to point out the possibility that some of the child's personality characteristics, habits, or behaviors may provoke an abusive response. He states that by analyzing the contributions of both siblings, one may begin to find a solution to the problem.

The parents' role in sibling maltreatment.

One of the main theories of family violence is the theory of the Cycle of Violence, or the belief that "violence begets violence" (Straus et al., 1980, p. 102). This theory states that children will learn that violence is an acceptable way to deal with conflict and will begin to use violence in their own interactions with other people (Green, 1984; Straus et al., 1980; Herzberger, 1996). According to this theory, children will model or imitate their parents' behavior. This may arise through the parents' use of corporal punishment or if spousal abuse is present in the home (Cicirelli, 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992).

It has also been found that many children who are abusive towards a sibling often have been victims of parental abuse or neglect themselves (Green, 1984; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984). Herzberger states that children who are exposed to frequent violence learn that violence is an appropriate response to one's problems. She states that this occurs partly through social learning, where the child observes and imitates others' use of violence to handle conflict. Learning may also occur through operant conditioning; if the use of violence leads to satisfactory results for the perpetrator, these methods of handling conflict will be self-reinforcing and will strengthen the likelihood that these destructive behaviors will occur again in the future.

Parents may also contribute to sibling violence through the use of inappropriate or ineffectual intervention strategies. Dunn (1984) claims that extreme sibling aggression is usually accompanied by poor discipline, little parental monitoring, and little organization in the family. Parents may not set out clear rules for working together or handling conflicts, which can contribute to the use of violence to handle conflict in the sibling relationship (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Reid & Donovan, 1990). Wiehe (1990) reports that parents often respond inappropriately to sibling violence, by ignoring or minimizing the abuse, blaming the victim, joining in on the victimization with the perpetrator (for example, by teasing or belittling), or responding with disbelief or indifference. He also states that parents may make attempts to control their children's abusive behavior, but do so in a way that is ineffective, such as by simply telling them to stop or by giving corporal punishment to the perpetrator.

Differential treatment of one's children may also lead to more competition and disputes between siblings, as one of the children may become increasingly resentful and violent toward the other child (Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). As stated earlier, rivalry between siblings is often inevitable, and can have positive effects if minimized. However, if parents treat siblings differentially, it is possible that rivalry may escalate to a destructive or abusive level. More research is necessary in this area, as the relationship between differential treatment and sibling violence has not been studied extensively in the past.

Another parental contribution to the development of sibling maltreatment is the extent to which such behavior is accepted by the parents. Many parents feel that it is inevitable that their children will interact in this way, and many parents may even encourage such behavior, with the belief that conflict between siblings provides important training for handling conflict with other people in the future (Cicirelli, 1995;

Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1990). Wiehe (1990) reported that in his qualitative study on sibling abuse, many of the victims claimed that their parents were aware of the abuse that was occurring but did nothing about it (71% were aware of physical abuse, and 69% were aware of emotional abuse). Thus, parents may be aware of what is happening, but are choosing to ignore or tolerate it. Herzberger (1996) states that if this type of behavior is tolerated, siblings will continue to use violent means to resolve conflict, as they come to believe that such behavior is acceptable. According to Green (1984), parents who allow such abuse to continue could be charged with abuse or neglect, as they are allowing physical injury to be inflicted upon one of their children.

Parents may feel that it is best that they do not interfere in sibling disputes, as they believe that sibling conflicts are an attempt to gain attention. Thus, if parents respond to this behavior, the children will be getting the attention they are seeking and will continue to use conflict as a means for getting attention in the future (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Dunn, 1984). Parents also believe that if they intervene, their children will not learn how to manage their own conflicts. Findings have been inconsistent with regards to parental intervention. Some studies have reported that intervention can be helpful if done in a firm, consistent, and egalitarian manner, with understanding for both siblings (Bennett, 1990; Dunn, 1984). In a study by Ross, Filyer, Lollis, and Perlman (1994), it was found that intervention by parents can help to de-escalate fighting and can lead to the enforcement of a set of rules for the children to follow. Furthermore, as previously discussed, if the treatment between siblings is abusive, parental intervention is necessary in order to prevent the development of learned helplessness on the part of the victim (Bennett, 1990).

On the other hand, other researchers have found that conflict tends to decrease if parents do not intervene and believe that this may be due to the fact that children will learn conflict resolution skills on their own if they are left to work out their own disputes (Volling & Belsky, 1992). In a study by Felson (1983), university students reflected back on their experiences of sibling conflict in adolescence and childhood, and reported that conflict increased when their mothers intervened. Many of these discrepant findings may be due to the inconsistency in the definitions of conflict and violence that have been used. It appears that in situations of conflict, parental intervention may not be helpful, whereas in cases of abuse or violence, intervention by the parents may be necessary. However, many parents do not differentiate between the two, and leave their children to work it out on their own when one child may be abusing the other.

The emotional climate of the family.

Sibling relationships are also affected by the parents' psychological adjustment and the emotional climate in the family (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Green, 1984). These factors will have an effect on how the parents manage the sibling relationship. For example, Brody and Stoneman state that people with emotional difficulties do not function well as parents, as they will be less involved, less affectionate, and will have more difficulties with managing and communicating with their children. There also seems to be a relationship between marital conflict and behavior problems in the children (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Whipple & Finton, 1995). Whipple and Finton (1995) and Rosenthal and Doherty (1984) report that other factors, such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation, limited education, placement in foster homes, and heightened parental stress, have been found to be related to sibling maltreatment. Brody and Stoneman conducted a study on the factors which contribute to sibling conflict and found that there was more sibling antagonistic behavior in families where the parents reported less enjoyment with one another, lower levels of marital satisfaction, and more family conflicts. Thus, it appears that family emotional climate has a significant contribution to the quality of the sibling relationship.

Treatment and Intervention Strategies

Previous research has also been focused on appropriate intervention strategies for parents and treatment programs for violent siblings. Dunn (1984) states that parents need to be firm, consistent, and loving, and to refrain from using physical forms of discipline with their children. Wiehe (1990) writes that it is important for parents to build awareness of abuse in their children, to listen and believe what their children tell them, to provide adequate supervision, to reward positive sibling interactions, and to seek help if sibling abuse is occurring. Parents also need to teach their children appropriate methods for dealing with conflict, such as verbal discussion, negotiation, compromise, and problem solving techniques (Cicirelli, 1995; Wiehe, 1990). Cicirelli further states that when conflict escalates into physical or emotional abuse, parents need to use more active interventions in order to avoid any negative effects to personality and social development that could arise as a result of such victimization.

Herzberger (1996) states that intervention strategies should include education and support programs targeted at high-risk children. These interventions should be initiated with pre-schoolers, as aggression is a stable trait that is often observed in early childhood. Unfortunately, few intervention or treatment programs for abusive sibling relationships exist. Since many of the causes of sibling violence have been attributed to parental characteristics, treatment needs to involve the entire family in order to teach parents appropriate intervention strategies and to help the family learn how to communicate with one another and deal with conflict in a more appropriate manner (Green, 1984; Whipple & Finton, 1995). Reid and Donovan (1990) have proposed an intervention model for sibling violence, which uses a problem solving, task-centered approach to family treatment. The authors have illustrated their methods with a single case evaluation, and have reported that their model was successful in reducing sibling and parental aggression. Although this treatment program sounds promising, more research is necessary to examine its utility further.

Previous Qualitative Research

Many of the studies on sibling conflict or violence that have been discussed have been quantitative designs, in the form of large-scale national surveys, experiments, or quantitatively analyzed questionnaires or interviews. Although some aspects of the sibling relationship can be studied through these methods, one will not be able to get a detailed description of the phenomenon from the victims' point of view. These studies have also been limited to an examination of the prevalence, causes, parental influences, and intervention strategies for sibling violence. Although an understanding of the causes is important, and the planning of intervention strategies is necessary, it appears that some essential aspects of this phenomenon have been neglected in previous research, such as the meaning of the experience for the victims.

A limited number of qualitative studies have been conducted recently, in order to address the victims' perception of the experience. One qualitative study was conducted by Wiehe (1990), who used questionnaires to examine the experiences of those who felt they had been victims of sibling abuse. Although this study was helpful in understanding the perceptions and experiences of the victims, Wiehe specifically asked for participants who described themselves as victims of sibling "abuse", which may have limited the study to the most extreme of cases. In a study conducted by Wilson and Fromuth, siblings who reported abusive behaviors in their sibling relationship did not label this treatment as abusive (as cited in American Psychological Association, 1997). Many people may not consider their sibling relationship to have been abusive, due to the extent to which such behavior is normalized and accepted in our society. Thus, it is likely that those who may have experienced abuse from a sibling, but have not labeled it as "abuse", would not have volunteered to take part in this study.

Another qualitative study was conducted by Crane (1997), who used an open-ended interview format with ten participants who stated that they had been physically or emotionally abused by a sibling. Once again, the researcher asked for participants who labeled themselves as having been abused, which may have excluded those who do not consider maltreatment from their sibling as "abuse". This study was also limited by the fact that the researcher used five standardized, open-ended questions in the interviews. Thus, this study was quite structured, and did not allow for interview questions to emerge as needed for each individual participant. The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, and found several common themes for the victims, such as experiencing "relentless fear" of being physically attacked, feeling that his/her parent(s) did not intervene appropriately, and having several negative effects from the abuse, such as loss of self-esteem, depression, lack of trust in others, and anger. The author used examples and quotes from the participants, which were helpful in allowing the reader to understand in more depth the experience of being maltreated by a sibling.

The Current Study

I wanted to expand on this qualitative examination of sibling maltreatment by conducting in-depth interviews and using the transcripts of the interviews to write narratives of the participants' experiences. In order to avoid the limitations of previous studies, I advertised for participants by asking for those who had been recipients of physical or verbal maltreatment, rather than abuse. Although I used an interview guide during the interviews, I allowed questions to emerge from the stories I was being told by the participants, in order to allow them to tell me what they felt was important about their experience. By conducting the study in this way, I hoped to gain an understanding of how victims of sibling maltreatment perceive their experiences. The questions which guided me throughout this process were as follows: (1) How do the participants make sense out of the treatment they received from their sibling? (2) What are the participants' feelings and perceptions about their experiences? And (3) What effects do the participants feel such treatment has had on their development? The methods that I used are described in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Method

Research Design

Much of the research that has been conducted in the area of sibling violence has been quantitative in design and has, therefore, been limited by the use of these methods. For example, surveys have been limited to determining the prevalence of sibling violence, and experiments have been limited to the examination of such things as the effects of gender, age gap, number of siblings, birth order, and parental intervention strategies. What is lacking in the research on sibling violence is a full understanding of the phenomenon form the victims' perspective: What are the participants' feelings and perceptions about their experiences of sibling maltreatment?

Although most previous research has been quantitative in nature, many of the perceptions and effects of sibling maltreatment cannot be quantified. Thus, qualitative research in the area of sibling violence is extremely important since each individual may have different interpretations and feelings about their experiences. In qualitative research, one focuses on the meaning of one's experience and does not strive to measure, generalize, or predict (Walker, 1996). My aim in this study was to understand the individual experiences of each participant in his/her own words, so that I could gain a deeper understanding of sibling maltreatment from the point of view of those who have experienced it. I wanted to extend the knowledge that has been gained through previous qualitative studies and provide in-depth descriptions of the experience of sibling violence by using a hermeneutic, narrative approach, through which the researcher seeks to understand the meanings that participants have attached to their experiences.

Hermeneutic approach.

The hermeneutic approach has epistemological origins in the philosophy and views of Heidegger, who emphasized the use of qualitative, naturalistic, contextual, historic, and inter-subjective research methods, in order to gain an understanding of human experience (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). The goal of hermeneutics is to discover meaning and to develop understanding through the description and interpretation of people's detailed stories of their experiences. Those who use hermeneutics also seek to understand everyday skills, practices and experiences; to find commonalities in the meanings and perceptions of those who have experienced a certain phenomenon; and to find exemplars or paradigm cases of the phenomenon so that the meanings of these experiences can be exemplified (Leonard, 1989). Although hermeneutic methods have traditionally been used to analyze written text, these methods have also been used in interviews to analyze the words of the participants and make sense of their "lived experience" (Walker, 1996, p. 225).

Leonard (1989) describes several assumptions which underlie the hermeneutic method. First, the researcher must already have a basic understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied, due to his/her cultural and linguistic background. By analyzing the words of each participant, the researcher gains new understanding by examining the parts of the participant's story in relation to the whole; then the whole can be reexamined by using the insight that has been gained by examining the parts. Interpretation moves back and forth between the parts and the whole until the researcher has reached the depth of understanding that he/she would like to reach (Kvale, 1986). A second assumption of hermeneutics is that the researcher is not truly objective, as he or she has had his/her own experiences and has developed a world-view of his/her own. However, reliability can be established through the identification of commonalities of the shared experience. Thus, the findings can be verified by those who participated in the study, as well as those outside of the study who have had similar experiences. A final assumption of hermeneutics is that the goal of research is not to formulate formal theories or make predictions; the "theory" that arises from a hermeneutic study involves the presentation of the meanings that people attach to their experiences.

The hermeneutic method is well suited to my study, as my goal was to understand the meanings that the participants had attached to the experience of being maltreated by a sibling. While I was looking for commonalities in experience, I also wanted to preserve the uniqueness of each participant, as valued by the hermeneutic method (Walker, 1996). Furthermore, I chose to use this method as I believed that many of the gaps in previous research findings, such as the description and interpretation of the victims' meaning of the experience, could be filled with the use of hermeneutics.

Narrative approach.

In order to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants, I decided that I would conduct narrative interviews, in which the participants would be encouraged to describe their sibling relationship in enough detail that I could write stories describing their experiences. Many of the questions were phrased in such a way as to facilitate story-telling from the participants. I chose this approach as I believed that it complemented the hermeneutic method. Susko (1994) states that the narrative approach allows one to find meaning within his/her life story. Since there are no predetermined answers in telling a narrative, people can develop their own meanings and explanations for events that have occurred in their lives.

Narratives are an integral part of life. Most people are exposed to narratives from the time they are born, in the form of lullabies and nursery rhymes, and they are present in various forms throughout one's lifetime (Berger, 1997; Riessman, 1993). Barthes (1988) describes the use of narratives as follows:

> Numberless are the world's narratives...narrative can be supported by articulated speech, oral or written, by image, fixed or moving, by gesture, and by the organized mixture of all these substances; it is

> present in myth, legend, fable, tale, tragedy, comedy, epic, history, pantomime, painting...stained glass window, cinema, comic book, news item, conversation. Further, in these almost infinite forms, narrative occurs in all periods, in all places, all societies...there has never been, any people anywhere without narrative... narrative is *there*, like life.(p. 89, as cited in Berger, 1997).

One of the most important ways that we learn about the world and ourselves is through the use of narratives. Berger (1997) states that narrative is the primary way through which many people organize their experiences into temporally meaningful events. Telling stories about one's experiences appears to be a universal human activity, one that is learned in childhood and carried on throughout one's life (Riessman, 1993). A narrative can also be referred to as a story and is defined as the telling of events that have happened or are happening (Berger, 1997). A narrative involves a sequence of events that take place over a certain time period and is usually told in the past tense, with the events ordered temporally (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993). Goffman (1981) states that narratives are like tapes or "strips of personal experience" from the person's past which are replayed and re-experienced as they are told to others (p. 174, as cited in Cortazzi, 1993). Narratives also include a plot, which transforms a simple list of events into a whole by emphasizing the contribution that each event makes to the story (Polkinghorne, 1988). Thus, in order to form a narrative, several different events are combined to form a coherent whole.

Riessman (1993) and Ochberg (1996) write that many individuals attempt to make sense out of their experiences by putting significant life events into a narrative form. Riessman claims that this is especially true of difficult or traumatic life experiences. She believes that the stories one makes of his/her experiences are fundamental aspects of meaning making and should be examined in their entirety, rather than analyzed in pieces by researchers. These narrative wholes are especially well-suited to hermeneutic enquiry, as one can study a narrative in order to discover how a participant has understood his/her experiences and made them meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Thus, I decided that I would conduct a hermeneutic study by examining the narratives that the participants have formed about their sibling relationships. By doing this, I would be able to learn about the experiences of sibling maltreatment as they were lived and interpreted by the participants. One of the main goals of the narrative approach is to show that people are not merely passive recipients of the events that happen to them; each person strives to make sense out of his/her experiences and to organize events into meaningful episodes. Cortazzi (1993) states that the use of narrative methods will allow researchers to make descriptions of certain experiences which will preserve the words of the participants. Susko (1994) writes that:

> ...by its very nature, the story invites us to enter into the lived world of the other. Such involvement entails imagination, exposure to one's own pain and joy, as well as a willingness to be involved with the mundane needs of the other (p. 103).

Thus, I believed that the narrative approach was an ideal way for me to address my research question and gain an understanding of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment.

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited in several ways. Signs advertising the study were posted in several buildings at the University of Alberta: the Education building, Student Union Building, and the Health Sciences Building. There was also an advertisement sent out to the graduate students in the Faculty of Education by way of a list-server, which sends out a weekly newsletter via electronic mail. Some of the participants also heard about the study through other people who were affiliated with the university. I did not attempt to limit the study to university students, as this has been a limitation in previous studies. For example, in a study that was conducted in 1997 by Crane, the participants were all high functioning college graduates from middle to upper-middle class families, which the author stated may not have been representative of many siblings who have been maltreated. In order to avoid this limitation, I posted signs in the Education Clinic, which is a counselling service within the university provided for the community. Furthermore, some of the people who volunteered for the study heard about the project through other people and were not students at the university.

Seven people volunteered to participate in the study. I considered conducting a focus group, or group interview, with the participants, in order to obtain a great deal of information from many different people. However, I felt that the participants were more likely to describe their experiences in more detail if they met with me individually, as this topic could be highly sensitive and might be difficult or embarrassing to discuss in front of a group. Thus, I decided to conduct individual interviews. I used a screening procedure (described in the next section) to determine which of the volunteers would be invited to participate in the interview portion of the study. I followed a purposive sampling procedure, which means that participants were chosen who could provide rich descriptions of the experience of sibling maltreatment (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). As described by Walker (1996), it is essential in a hermeneutic study to approach the project with the belief that the participants have the answers to the key questions, thus playing the role of the "experts in the phenomenon" (p. 235).

Wilson and Hutchinson (1991) state that the goal in a hermeneutic study is to hear "the fullest story possible" from the participants, and discover the "lived experience" (p. 270). Thus, it was very important for me to recruit participants who had experienced the phenomenon to a sufficient degree to be able to describe their experiences to me. However, I also excluded those who had experienced extremely high levels of abuse from a sibling. I was interested in obtaining an intensive sample, rather than an extreme or deviant case sample (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). These authors define an intensity sample as one in which participants have experienced the phenomenon of interest intensely, but not extremely. Intensity sampling is done in order to avoid involving participants that have had such an extreme experience that the findings are dismissed as being too atypical to be helpful to others who have experienced the phenomenon.

In order to recruit such a sample, I used the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) which gave an overall conflict score for each participant. The CTS was developed at the University of New Hampshire in 1971, and has been used in numerous studies of family violence (Straus et al., 1980). It is used to assess family conflict by examining the methods that are used to resolve conflicts that arise between family members. As described by Straus and colleagues, there are three different conflict resolution tactics which are measured by the scale: the use of rational discussion and argument, the use of verbal and symbolic means of hurting, such as insults or threats, and the use of physical force or violence. The scale has been modified to suit my purposes in this study and has been rewritten slightly so that it applies to a sibling relationship. I have also altered the format so that it can be used as a paper-and-pencil test, rather than read out loud to the participants by the researcher, as originally intended.

For each of the three tactics for resolving conflict, there are several different options or actions which may have been performed by the sibling. The participants were asked to reflect back on adolescence and to check off how often each of these actions occurred on a scale ranging from "Never Happened" to "Happened 20 or More Times". Participants were also asked to rate whether each action had ever occurred, either at a time before or after adolescence. In order to score the CTS, scores ranged from 0 to 6 for each action performed, with 0 corresponding to "Never Happened" and 6 corresponding to "Happened 20 or More Times". Scores were also given for the second part, where a response of "yes - this action has occurred" receiving a score of 2, and a response of "no - this action has never occurred" receiving a score of 0. The scores were totaled for all of the actions; those participants who had CTS scores below 50 (low levels of conflict) or above 100 (high levels of abuse) were excluded from the study.

There were several other characteristics I was looking for in the participants. For example, I wanted to include volunteers who only had one sibling with whom they experienced high levels of conflict, as I felt that conflict between several siblings involves different dynamics than conflict between two siblings, with one of the siblings consistently playing the role of the victim. I was also interested in participants who were the recipients of sibling maltreatment, rather than the perpetrators. In addition, I only included participants who were over the age of 18, in order to avoid ethical difficulties with participants who were under-age. As previously discussed, several of the previous studies in the area of sibling conflict or violence have shown inconclusive results with regards to the effects of same-sex versus mixed-sex dyads, gender, age, and age gap. Thus, in my study, there were not any restrictions with regards to these factors.

After the screening procedure, I asked four of the participants to return for the interview portion of the study. All of those who were asked to return agreed to continue participation. I continued to look for suitable participants to interview until I had four participants who had experienced the phenomenon to a sufficient degree and were able to provide a rich description of their experiences. Although the sample was relatively small, it was the standard size for an exploratory, narrative study, where the value lies in a few detailed storied experiences, rather than large sample sizes. The ages of the participants were 26, 29, 49, and 53. The participants were from relatively diverse backgrounds, two being students, one a professor, and one a retired nurse. There were three women and one man involved in the study. Three were Canadian and one was American. More information on the characteristics of the participants is provided in the narratives where necessary.

Procedure: Data Collection and Data Analysis

I had decided to use interviews in the study, because they can be used to gather in-depth descriptions of experience and can provide a great deal of rich information about the phenomenon in question (Becker, 1986; Kvale, 1983). Becker states that interviews can often provide more information than written methods and can be used to understand the meanings and world-view of the participants. Ochberg (1996) also states that interviews are more effective at getting close to the experience of the participants and that other methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, can be more alienating. Interviews allow the participants to discuss the events that are important to them, in their own words. By using open-ended questions in the interviews, I hoped to gather enough information from the participants in order to write the narratives of their experiences.

Interviews have been criticized because the information that is obtained from an interview often involves some distortion from objective truth, as the interviewee can selectively recall certain experiences or recollect some memories inaccurately, and the recollection of some events may not be consistent over time (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993). However, Riessman argues that facts are a product of our interpretation, and that the recollections that are reported by participants in interviews represent their "truth". Even if the person is lying, forgetting, or exaggerating their stories, their recollections provide a portrayal of the past, possibly not as it "actually was", but how it was interpreted by the person describing it (p. 22). One's narratives do not mirror the world "out there"; they are constructed, creatively authored, and interpreted by those who experience them (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). Thus, since the goal of hermeneutics is to discover the meaning and interpretations of each individual, interviews are an appropriate means for fulfilling this goal.

After advertising for participants by way of posting signs and sending out advertisements, I waited for volunteers to contact me. Once a potential participant notified me of his/her interest, I set up an initial meeting with the person. I decided to follow the model that is outlined by Becker (1986), in which the researcher has three contacts with the participants. She calls these contacts the structuring interview, the data gathering interview, and the corroborative interview. The structuring interview was done with all interested parties who contacted me, and was mainly used to screen for participants who had salient experiences of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment. This meeting took approximately 30 minutes to complete. During this time, I gave each participant a letter describing the study (see Appendix I); had the participant sign informed consent forms (see Appendix II); asked the participant to fill out a demographics sheet (see Appendix III); and asked the participant to complete the CTS (see Appendix IV). I also asked each participant to briefly describe their relationship to their brother or sister and answered any questions that he/she had about the project. Each participant was told that I was trying to obtain information about a broad range of experiences, and that they may not be asked back for an interview if the experiences they had briefly described to me did not fit into the areas in which I needed more information.

The CTS was scored, and by looking at all the material I had gathered in the first meeting (CTS score, demographic sheet, and the information that was given to me verbally by the participants) I decided whether each participant had experienced the phenomenon to a sufficient degree for the purposes of the study. Those who met my selection criteria were contacted to be invited back for the data gathering interview, which consisted of an open-ended, semi-structured interview. The questions were asked in such a way as to draw out important units of meaning from the participants' pasts, in a way that invited them to discuss the experiences that they felt were most important and relevant (Hermans, 1992). Questions for the interview were taken from the previous literature in the area or from areas that had not been addressed in previous studies (see Appendix V for the Interview Guide). Interviews lasted approximately one to two hours and were audio-taped so that they could be transcribed after the meeting.

Each interview was transcribed in full, and using the transcription, I put the information together to form a narrative of each participant's experience. I used information from both the structuring interview and the data gathering interview to create a complete picture of each participants' experience of sibling maltreatment. My goal in writing the narratives was to provide a descriptive account of the stories that had already been put in place by the participants. Quotes from the participants were presented in the narratives (indented, single spaced, and in italics) and were used to make certain aspects of the phenomenon more personal and real to the reader, as the quotes represent the participants' own words during the interview.

Polkinghorne (1988) describes descriptive narratives as those that are written to provide an accurate description of narrative accounts that have been used by the participants to make a sequence of events meaningful. Thus, at this stage of analysis, I attempted to preserve the stories of the participants. However, Berger (1997) and Ochberg (1996) write that the interpretation of a text requires that the researcher fill in many blank areas and make a confused, incomplete, cloudy, and somewhat contradictory text clear. Often this is done using the researcher's own background and knowledge. The goal of hermeneutics is to listen to another's story, but also to bring one's own interpretation to the information he/she is provided with (Josselson, 1996).

Although I acknowledged the fact that the narratives would be influenced by my interpretation of the data, I wanted to ensure that the narratives were still true to the participants' experiences. Thus, I decided to have a third meeting, called the corroborative interview, in which each participant would have an opportunity to read the narrative and comment on whether he/she felt the story was accurate. This third meeting was presented as an option for each participant; three of the participants decided to meet the third time. In one case, the participant had moved out of town at the time of the corroborative interview. Thus, the narrative was mailed to her for feedback (see Appendix VI for the letter that was sent with the narrative).

Each participant was asked if there was anything that he/she would like to add to the narrative or if there was anything I wrote that he/she would like changed. Kvale (1986) suggests that this is an important step in the interview process, as it gives the participants an opportunity to comment on the researcher's interpretation. Furthermore, themes which were discussed briefly in the data gathering interview may be deepened and described in more detail after reading the narrative. In the current study, the only changes that were requested by the participants were grammatical or the addition of missing facts. None of these changes involved any addition or deletion of content.

After the narratives were written and the third meeting with the participants was completed, all of the narratives were compared with one another and examined as a whole, in order to find commonalities and variations in the experience of sibling maltreatment. Riessman (1993) writes that in this stage of analysis, one attempts to identify critical moments, specify similarities of experience, and make sense of the phenomenon. Thus, I attempted to combine all of the elements from the different narratives into an aggregate, or "meta-story" of the experience of sibling maltreatment (Riessman, 1993, p. 13). In order to do this, I followed the three steps that were outlined by Leonard (1989), who writes that data analysis in a hermeneutic study is conducted through three different processes: thematic analysis, analysis of exemplars, and the search for paradigm cases.

In thematic analysis the data is read several times so that the researcher can develop a global understanding of the phenomenon. This process has been described by Wilson and Hutchinson (1991) as textual immersion, in which transcripts or narratives are read and reread several times in order to get a feeling for the whole and to identify themes that are common across participants. Thus, the first step in this stage of data analysis was to read all of the completed narratives repeatedly, in order to achieve a sense of understanding about the phenomenon as a whole. By becoming immersed in the data, several themes emerged as consistent across participants, and I developed categories to describe these themes. These themes and categories are presented in the next chapter.

Analysis of exemplars involves examining the narratives for certain events or incidents that are particular examples of the phenomenon in question. By identifying these specific situations, the researcher is able to develop exemplars, or vignettes, that capture the meaning of the phenomenon (Leonard, 1989). Leonard writes that the meaning that is embodied in these examples can be generalized to other situations that may be very different in context from the exemplar, but carry the same meaning. In this study, I examined the narratives in an attempt to find particular events that were exemplary in describing the experience of sibling maltreatment. The exemplars that are described are those that seem to carry meaning that is shared across events for a particular participant. Thus, exemplars were used in the data analysis to show "a strong instance of a particularly meaningful transaction..." (Leonard, 1989, p. 54).

The third process in the data analysis was the search for paradigm cases, which are "strong instances of patterns of particular meanings" (Leonard, 1989, p. 54). Thus, paradigm cases differ from exemplars in that exemplars are instances of particular events, whereas a paradigm case is the meaning that is developed for an experience as a whole. Paradigm cases help to identify the interpretation and meaning that an individual has attached to a set of experiences. In this study, I attempted to identify the broad meanings that each participant had attached to his/her experience of sibling maltreatment as a whole, rather than to particular incidences of altercations with his/her brother or sister. The paradigm cases that are described are those that I felt captured the essence of the experience of sibling maltreatment for the participants in the current study.

As a final step in the data analysis I identified aspects of the phenomenon that differed between participants. As part of my goal in conducting this study was to preserve the uniqueness of each individual experience, I examined the narratives to identify any notable characteristics of the phenomenon or of the meanings attached to the phenomenon, that were unique to any of the participants. These differences were presented and described in order to show that the experience of sibling maltreatment does have some elements that will differ according to the individual who experiences it.

Trustworthiness

In quantitative studies, researchers strive to establish high levels of validity and reliability, which are based on the view that there is an objective reality which can be captured if the appropriate methods are followed. Thus, in quantitative studies, the researcher puts forth great effort to control extraneous variables and to ensure that the study is carried out in the most objective and unbiased manner as possible. In contrast, qualitative researchers base their studies on the view that reality is subjective, and that the understanding of human experience is socially constructed and depends on the participants' perspectives, as well as the researcher's beliefs and biases (Walker, 1996). Thus, as previously stated, those who conduct hermeneutic research acknowledge the fact that the researcher is not objective or unbiased:

> ...every work is rewritten by its reader who imposes upon it a new grid of interpretation for which he is not generally responsible but which comes to him from his culture, from his time, in short from another discourse...it is futile and silly to try to leave off being oneself in order to become someone else; were one to succeed, the result would be of no interest...we *gain* by being different from what we seek to understand (Todorov, 1981, p. xxx, as cited in Berger, 1997).

Despite the fact that qualitative research emphasizes subjective reality, credibility and truthfulness must still be established in order for results to be considered meaningful. Patton (1990) states that qualitative rigor can be shown by a commitment to being balanced, fair, and conscientious in describing the various experiences of the participants. He states that it is most important for researchers to be truthful about the data and to provide accurate interpretations of the phenomenon. Thus, in qualitative research, the question is really one of the trustworthiness of the researcher, and the credibility of the findings, rather than the ability to remain objective.

Trustworthiness can be established in several different ways. Leonard (1989) states that there are four factors to be considered in evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative study: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Truth value is the degree to which the researcher has provided an accurate description of the phenomenon, as it is perceived and lived by the participants. Riessman (1993) uses the term persuasiveness instead of truth value, which she defines as the ability of the researcher to provide an interpretation of experience which is reasonable and convincing. In this study, I tried to reach a high level of truth value or persuasiveness by using quotes from each participant. I also attempted to use the participants' own words in the narratives and tried to emphasize aspects of the phenomenon that they stressed as being important. When I compared the narratives to one another, I supported any themes that I discovered with examples from the narratives.

Truth value is also related to Riessman's concept of correspondence, which means that the interpretation is taken back to the participants for corroboration (1993). As previously discussed, this form of trustworthiness was established in the third meeting that I had with the participants (the corroborating interview), in which the participant was given a copy of the narrative and asked for his/her input and comments. In this way, I was able to establish that the narratives I had written were true to the participants' experiences.

Applicability is similar to the concept of generalizability in quantitative research (Leonard, 1989). It is difficult to achieve a high level of generalizability in qualitative studies, due to the small sample sizes and purposive sampling that is used. However, applicability can be established if the researcher is able to provide interpretations of the phenomenon that fit with the experiences of other people who did not take part in the study. Thus, representativeness of the sample is replaced with representativeness of the themes and patterns that are identified through data analysis. It is not possible to predict whether other people who have experienced sibling maltreatment will share the themes that I have identified in this study. However, I believe that it is likely that many of their experiences would encompass these themes, as they were common to all of the participants in this study, even though their experiences were very diverse and different from one another.

Leonard (1989) also proposed the idea of consistency, which is similar to the quantitative concept of reliability. In a hermeneutic study, one does not assume that the results can be replicated exactly, as people are constantly changing and their perspectives on a certain experience are likely to shift as time passes. However, consistency can be ascertained by providing enough original data for the readers of the research to agree with the interpretations and findings that are presented. A concept which is related to consistency is pragmatic use, which is described as the extent to which a study becomes the basis for further work in the area (Riessman, 1993). In order to establish consistency and pragmatic use in this study, I have described how my interpretations were developed. I have described in detail the procedures that were used in the study, and I have made primary data (ie. interview transcripts) available upon request. By following these procedures, I have provided a basis for my interpretations, have provided procedures for replication, and have offered other researchers the opportunity to examine the transcripts to see if they agree with the data analysis.

The final approach described by Leonard (1989) for establishing trustworthiness is neutrality, which is used to describe the researcher's role in the study. Although qualitative research does not espouse the idea that the researcher must be detached and objective, it is also important for the researcher to be able to keep a clear personal perspective and to realize when his/her biases or beliefs are interfering with accurate interpretation of the data. A concept related to this is bracketing, which is used in qualitative studies to aid researchers in identifying any presuppositions, biases, preconceptions, or previous knowledge that he/she may have about the phenomenon that is being studied. By identifying these influences, the researcher is not only made more aware of any factors that may interfere with accurate interpretation, but the reader is also made aware of the researcher's biases. In this study, I have bracketed my previous experience and beliefs about the phenomenon in the next chapter, where I tell my story of sibling conflict and how I came to be interested in studying the experience of sibling maltreatment.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, there were several ethical considerations that I had to take into account. Before beginning data collection, I submitted the ethical procedures I planned to follow to the Ethical Review Board in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta (see Appendix VII for the Ethics form). My application was approved with the following ethical considerations.

In the first meeting with participants, they were provided with a letter describing the study and their role as a participant, as well as their rights to confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also asked to sign an informed consent form, which stated that they had read the letter and understood their rights. In order to maintain confidentiality, a code number was assigned to each participant. This number was used on the CTS and any other correspondence that I had with the participants. Furthermore, I asked each of the participants to provide me with pseudonyms for him/herself and his/her sibling, which I used when writing the narratives. Some of the participants requested that I select pseudonyms on their behalf, as they could not think of any names they would like to use. I also made sure that the narratives did not contain any other information which could be used to identify the participants.

The interviews were audio-taped, so that they could be transcribed at a later date. The audiotapes, signed consent forms, demographic sheets, and CTS were kept in a safe and secure place that was accessible only to myself. The participants were told that the only people who would see these materials would be myself or my supervisor. The participants were also told that the materials would be kept until my research in this area is completed. At that time, the audiotapes and any other materials will be destroyed.

Due to the fact that sibling maltreatment may have been a very sensitive issue for some of the participants, I gave each of the participants a list of counselling referrals, so that they could discuss these issues further with a counsellor if they wished.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

In this chapter, I present the narratives that were written from the data collected during interviews with the participants. These narratives are used to provide the reader with an in-depth description, or story, of the experience of sibling maltreatment. I have also described my own beliefs and experiences with the phenomenon by beginning the chapter with my own story, which describes how I came to be interested in the topic of sibling maltreatment and how working on this project has led me to reflect back on my experiences with my sibling. I felt it was necessary to include my own story because an important feature of hermeneutic inquiry is the role of the researcher and his/her interpretation of the data, which is often influenced by one's experiences and beliefs. By providing my perspective and acknowledging my position with regards to the phenomenon, I hoped to make the analysis of the data more credible and trustworthy.

Following my story, I tell the stories of the four participants who took part in the study. After each story is presented, the four narratives are compared in order to identify common themes of the experience of being the victim of sibling maltreatment. I also provided the reader with exemplars and paradigm cases which are used to exemplify the meaning that is attached to the experience of being maltreated by a sibling. These exemplars and paradigm cases are also used in order to describe the interpretations and meanings of the experience from the victims' points of view. The chapter concludes with unique aspects of the phenomenon which seemed to be important to the participants in describing their experiences of sibling maltreatment.

The Narratives

My own story.

Before beginning this research project, I had never thought about the conflicts between siblings as being abusive or damaging to children. I have an older brother and I had always thought that the fights we had were just part of the sibling relationship. Like most people in our society, I believed that conflict between brothers and sisters was normal and inevitable.

However, one summer evening, I received a call from Alice, a girlfriend of mine, who invited me out for an evening with "the girls". She told me that it was going to be a relaxing evening spent at one of our apartments, renting movies and talking. I readily agreed to be a part of the evening, as I had just had a hectic week at work and was in the mood for a night of socializing with my friends. I drove to Alice's apartment to pick her up and we drove to Rebecca's apartment together.

There were five women out that night. Rebecca, Beth, Shannon, Alice, and myself. We came from a variety of backgrounds and occupations, were different ages, and had very different lives. For example, Rebecca was an accountant in her late 20's and was divorced. Beth was 21, worked part time in a clothing store, and was an artist. Alice was in law school and was in her mid-20's, while Shannon, 24, was working on her undergraduate degree in sciences and working as a waitress part-time. As for myself, I was 23 at the time and was working for an insurance company while applying to go to graduate school in counselling psychology.

One of the main things that we all had in common was that we were currently single. Inevitably, as we sat in Rebecca's living room, drinking wine and snacking on the food that she had put out for us, our conversation turned to our thoughts on men and our previous relationships. At one point, Alice stated very matter of factly: "I think my brother poisoned me against ever finding a good man. I mean, he has always been such an asshole. I don't have much faith that there are any men out there who will treat me right."

She was very serious, and said it so bluntly that we all turned to look at her. Her face was straight as she reached for another handful of chips. But her voice had been filled with contempt, and I asked her what she meant.

"Well..." she said, her brow furrowed, "I just mean that when someone cuts you down so much, puts you down so much that you feel like you're fat and worthless and no one will ever love you... I mean, there's only so much of that a person can take before they start to believe it."

The room was dead quiet. For some reason, her comments affected me deeply. I began to think about my own relationship with my brother. Had he poisoned me? Had he treated me so badly that I had been damaged in my adult life? I had never thought about this before...

Alice went on. "Look at last summer. I can't even remember what it is that I did to make him so mad...but he grabbed my arm and twisted it so hard behind my back that he broke it..."

"Oh my God, " I said to her. "He actually broke your arm?"

"Yeah. I had to get a cast and everything. And you know...he never even said he was sorry..." Alice said, the pain evident in her eyes.

Rebecca spoke up from the other side of the room, " My brother was like that too. He was so awful. He'd push me down the stairs and punch me, push me, kick me. He did whatever he wanted. He took everything out on me."

The conversation continued on in this way, with all of us adding to the story from our own experiences. The picture that we created of the sibling relationship was one of humiliation, degradation, physical and emotional pain, and abuse. And the wheels in my mind began to turn...

* * *

At that time in my life, I was working at an insurance company in order to pay the bills. My real calling was to become a psychologist and in my spare time I was doing whatever I could to make my dream come true. I was so immersed in the process of applying for graduate school that I was constantly analyzing the world around me to see what would make a good topic to research for my thesis. It was not a far jump for me to take the conversation that I had with my friends that Friday evening and begin to think about what an interesting thesis topic the sibling relationship would be. As time went on, my interest and enthusiasm grew, especially from the reactions I received from others when I told them my ideas. I found that whenever I told someone that I planned to study sibling conflict, everybody with a brother or sister had a story to tell. Some of these memories were recalled in a reminiscent, light-hearted manner, with laughter and a sparkle in the person's eyes as he or she told tales of childhood spats and rivalry, while others grew solemn and grim as they recalled events that were hurtful to them. I was amazed by the tremendous impact these siblings seemed to have had on these people's lives, both positive and negative. I was also struck by the storied nature in which I was told about these experiences. These conversations played a large role in my continued interest in the topic, as well as my choice of research method and design.

I was accepted into graduate school, and eventually began to work formally on my thesis project. As the process continued, I began to examine my own relationship with my brother. Although I felt that it was necessary to look at my experiences, thoughts, and beliefs regarding this phenomenon in order to be ethical and trustworthy, it was not something I particularly wanted to do. My brother holds a special place in my life... I had never thought that his treatment of me had been "abusive" and I did not want to re-analyze it and find that to be the case.

There is no question that we fought, and there is no question that there were things that he did that hurt me, both physically and emotionally. When I was a child, I looked up to my brother. I thought he was so smart; he could think up the most creative, fun games and he was good at everything he did. He seemed to do everything better than me, which was an endless source of frustration for me. There was always an underlying sense of competition between us, where he would say to me, "Okay, it's your turn to think up a game to play." I could never seem to come up with something that measured up to his creative ideas and he did not hesitate to tell me that my ideas were stupid, boring, or unoriginal.

We fought a lot. Every day. The physical aspect was not so much of an issue as the emotional. He was two and a half years older than me and quite a bit bigger, as I was always very small. Despite this, I always fought back when he hit me. If he punched me, I'd punch him back. If it got to the point where he was hurting me excessively, I would tell my parents. They would intervene simply by telling him to stop it, which he usually did.

Far more upsetting was the teasing, belittling and "mind games" he played with me. He knew me so well that he knew exactly which buttons to push and what to say to hurt me and he did it often. He teased me to the point of tears. He would punch my dolls in the face. He would convince me our dog loved him the best. As we got older, the mind games that he used became more sophisticated. For example, he told me that he was writing down every bad thing I ever did, and that he was going to save this notebook so that he could stand up and read it out loud to all my guests on my wedding day.

I felt powerless and helpless whenever he treated me this way. Even though I begged him to leave me alone, he wouldn't stop what he was doing until he was ready. At times I tried to say or do things that would hurt him the way he was hurting me, but he never seemed to be affected by it, so I gave up trying to get back at him. I felt that there was nothing I could do to stop him; all I could do was cry and hide in my bedroom.

And where were my parents in all this? When I was still quite young, I remember telling them that this was going on and that not much was done about it. "Work it out for yourselves," seemed to be the motto in my family. However, I had no idea how to work it out. How to get him to stop. I wish that they had paid more attention to us, believed me when I told them what was going on, and intervened. In adolescence, I didn't even bother telling them anymore, as I knew it was useless. And yet I was receiving daily assaults on my self-esteem.

I know that my parents had problems of their own. Maybe they were so involved with these problems that the conflict between my brother and I went unnoticed. Or maybe it was just another problem that they didn't have the energy to deal with. So I don't blame my brother as much as I blame my parents. I believe that it was their responsibility to make sure their children were not abusing one another. As for my brother, I think that he was reacting to the situation and the problems my family was facing. I don't think my brother and I had much of a voice in our house, and he was acting out his frustration. Unfortunately, his emotions were taken out on me.

Today, we have a more positive relationship. There was even a time a few years ago that I would say he was one of my closest friends. We've grown apart a little since then, due to distance, relationships, and other issues. I don't know if his treatment had any lasting effect on me. Perhaps, a few dents in my self-esteem, a fear in trusting people fully, and a strong determination to make sure that my children treat each other with love and respect.

I guess I have to admit that his treatment was emotionally abusive. If I were to pretend that I was an observer, watching the exchanges between the two of us, I know that I would say that some of the things he did were cruel, heartless, and abusive. And I know the pain and heartbreak I felt when I was treated that way. I find it odd that I hold no anger or resentment towards him, and that I hold my parents responsible. And I am curious to see how my participants feel about their experiences.

Amy's story.

Amy (all names have been changed) grew up in the northwestern United States with two brothers. She was the middle child. Fred was a year older and Jack was two and a half years younger. When she was about 7 years of age, her parents got divorced. Shortly after the divorce, her mother remarried and Amy and her brothers lived in a house with her mother and step-father. The children would go to visit their father every other weekend and on some holidays.

Amy's father was a clinical psychologist. She believes that he used the knowledge he gained as a practicing psychologist to become manipulative and mentally abusive towards the children. He would tell them negative things about their mother and step-father in order to try to convince them that they were bad, neglectful people.

> *He had his own problems which he was trying to deal with and trying to solve by becoming a psychologist and in turn sort of played these mental games with his children that, at least now, I can clearly see was inappropriate. But it was very confusing at the time. I just had no clue why he was acting that way... He did a good job of convincing us that our mom was evil and she was purposely trying to hurt us. It was more just the dynamics of those two not getting along and he was trying to sort of use us as tools to get at her.*

During that time, Amy felt very confused. Not only was there a divorce to deal with, but she was being placed in between her parents, and there was her step-father to adjust to as well.

> *I just remember being kind of confused...and just wondering...where's Dad? Who's this other guy living here with my mom?*

Throughout all of the changes that were going on in the family, Amy and her brothers tried to stick together as best they could. She felt as though Fred was influenced the most by their father because he tended to believe the lies their father told more than the other two children. As a result of this, he was often placed in the middle of their parents.

> *...my older brother, it seemed like he had a lot more of a burden on him, placed by my father... My dad was more able to get him to do things or say things to my mom than he was me or my younger brother...and some of the things he was totally convinced of and...still believes...*

In addition to the family problems Amy was experiencing, Fred began to take his frustrations out on her and Jack in both physical and emotional ways. This contributed to her feelings of confusion because she couldn't understand why her brother would treat her this way.

> *...my older brother would do things that, at the time, I just remember thinking, that is so cruel. Why is he doing that? I'm his friend. I'm his sister. We're trying to get through this... So now I still think, "Why did he behave that way?"*

Amy and her younger brother, Jack, got along quite well and did not fight very much at all. This was partly because she was bigger than he was, but also because he was "an innocent little kid" who "couldn't even think of being mean." In contrast, Amy and Fred would fight on a daily basis. Fred fought even more with Jack simply because he was smaller and didn't stand up for himself as much as Amy did. Fights with Fred would occur over trivial matters such as control over the television.

> *...he would take control over the TV and... if anybody else wanted to watch something else and you changed the channel, you'd get punched. He'd punch you or threaten to beat you up or whatever... It was a constant struggle... It just seemed like he really wanted to take charge or control over almost everything. Every choice you could make, he would want his choice.*

Fred would also try to exert his power and control by putting Amy in situations where she could not escape. For example, there were times when he locked her out of the house when it snowed, just so that he could throw snowballs at her and "torture" her with the snow.

> *...it would be snowing and I'd know that he was going to be throwing snowballs at me, which I hated. Doing everything he could to throw them down my shirt and everything. I couldn't run away fast enough. I couldn't fight back. He would always win. It was just a matter of how quickly could I get away from him. There was one occasion when it did snow and he actually locked me out of the house so that...he could get me in the snow, and torture me with the snow, and all this stuff. I couldn't get away.*

This sort of behaviour continued into high school. Fred was a wrestler and as a form of torture, he would practice his wrestling moves on Amy.

> *...he would laugh while he was doing this. Even when we were kids, he had this weird laugh, and you knew it wasn't really enjoyable, but that's just the way he was. Maybe he was confused as to why he was behaving that way. I don't know. But he'd laugh, kind of grab me and pin me down... Some of his wrestling moves kind of hurt. So I'd say, "Ow! It's hurting, it's hurting..." but he'd still do it.*

Fred would also use verbal means to hurt Amy, and would constantly call her names or put her down.

> *...basically he tried to make me feel...small or worthless...just always criticizing everything. ...If we were goofing around singing a song, he'd say, "You're totally off key." ...Even back then, I tried not to take things personal, but it would usually be personal things. Like he had a certain friend of his that I had a crush on and he would tell me that that friend of his wouldn't come near me with a ten foot pole and I was disgusting and his friend thought I was gross and stuff... He hurt my feelings a lot. He knew exactly what would get me, and he did it.*

Amy feels as though the conflict she experienced with her brother was completely one-sided, and that she never instigated any of the disputes that they had.

> *...I can't remember a time when I ever started a fight with him or ever said anything to purposely hurt him or put him down or anything. So, basically, I*

> *was totally at the receiving end...I knew I didn't deserve it...but I didn't know why he did it. I was just [thinking], "Why is he doing this? This is bizarre. This is really cruel. I don't understand."*

Amy was very confused by Fred's behaviour. Not only was she having to deal with his poor treatment of her, but he would treat Jack in ways that would further traumatize her by their cruelty. Because he was bigger than she was, she often felt powerless to stop him from being so mean to Jack. However, there were times when his treatment was so heartless that she felt that she had to intervene.

> *...he would do things to him, like pinning him down by his neck... My younger brother was kind of claustrophobic so my older brother would take an afghan... those blankets with all the holes in it... an d put it over his head, so obviously he could breathe and he was fine. But he would do it just to torture him and say, "You can't breathe! You're going to die!" My younger brother would just be hysterical thinking he was going to die... I would usually intervene on that kind of thing because it was just so cruel I couldn't stand to watch it... It would get to a certain point and I thought, "I just can't deal with any of this anymore. It's just too cruel." I would beg my older brother, "Please stop doing that. He's scared and he's crying." Even times, I would try to ...push him off of my younger brother, but it was more just pleading, "Please don't. He's scared and panicking. It's cruel."*

Fred's maltreatment of Amy also continued at school. They were very close in age, and when they were 12 or 13 they were in a split classroom with grades four, five, and six altogether in one room. A lot of people thought that they were twins. This proximity in age gave Amy a sense of closeness with Fred, even though she felt that these feelings were never reciprocated.

> *...there was a...connection that we had with each other of being close brother and sister, even though he was really mean to me. I guess I always felt close to him, even though we never talked about anything. The only interaction really we had was me trying to get away from him.*

This type of relationship continued into junior high, where Amy would try to provide support and friendship to Fred, who would continually humiliate her in front of his friends.

> *...we would get to school at a certain time and there would be a certain amount of time before classes would start. He would say, "You come with me. You walk with me to my locker. You stick with me." He would make me go with him because he didn't want to be alone. He felt self-conscious or whatever. So I'd go with him and I knew, at the time even I knew, "Well, he's uncomfortable being alone, so I'll do him this favor." So almost every day, [I'd] walk to his locker. He would make me stay at his locker until his friends got there and then he would say something mean to me like: "Get away from me. What are you doing here? Why are you following me?" So when his friends would arrive, he would become mean...*

Despite this treatment, Amy would continue to go to Fred's locker with him and each time that she accompanied him, he would humiliate her once again. She had a very strong sense of loyalty to her brothers and felt that since they were going through such a hard time with their family, they needed to rely on one another for support and help.

> *...I almost had a sense that he needed...a friend or something. So I would do it. I guess just 'cause I had this whole idea that we were just trying to get by and we were trying to survive. So, we've got to stick together.*

In order to cope with Fred's maltreatment of her, Amy would simply try to avoid him by staying in her bedroom. She would often use her bedroom as a place to "hide" from the upsetting events in her household. Surprisingly, Fred respected that her bedroom was her safe place and she was left alone whenever she was in her room. However, she realized later that he was invading her privacy by "snooping" in her room when she was not home.

> *...I don't remember even saying anything back to him. I would immediately just go back to my room and if it was hurtful enough I would cry. We each had our own rooms and I would just go in my own room and entertain myself with the radio or stereo, whatever...the only safe place was my room. But it didn't have a lock or anything, so if he really wanted to he could* have *come in to bother me*

> *or whatever. But I don't remember him really doing that. Our rooms were like our own little zone. It was kind of understood that you don't go into the other person's room... I would say that I spent a lot of my childhood in my bedroom. Avoiding. Just try[ing] to avoid him as much as possible.*

There were times when Amy would become so frustrated and fed up with Fred's treatment of her that she would try to fight back.

> *I remember several occasions where I just had enough and decided, "Well, I'm just going to hit him back," and I would and he would hit me back harder and I'd hit him back harder, and eventually, he would win because he could hit me harder.*

Even though it seemed as though she was in a no-win situation, Amy did not give up in her attempts to stand up for herself. However, in most cases it seemed as though Fred was still able to manipulate the exchange so that he came out on top. One time, Amy and Fred were waiting at the bus stop to go to school. It was a wintery day, with snow and ice on the road. Fred began to tease Amy, and she decided to fight back. However, her attempts didn't work for her, and once again she was struck by the cruelty and unfairness of her situation.

> *He was picking on me and usually I just said [to myself], "Oh, leave him alone," and didn't really think of it. But, he did something, shoved me or tripped me or something and I couldn't understand why he would do that. The bus started to come over the hill and I got so mad at him I decided I was going to kick him and I took a full swing with my leg to kick him. He grabbed my foot and he yanked it up in the air and, of course, I went falling on the road and the bus was coming, so all my friends on the bus were seeing. I was so upset that I ran home and didn't go to school that day...I just...I thought that was pretty cruel...I didn't know any of my friends whose brothers did that to them... He was stronger than me and a little bigger than me, so that gave him an opportunity to be mean, if he wanted to.*

And another time,

> *...he made me so mad that I decided that I was going to beat him up. It just got to where I was going to go all out and just give it everything. If I was going to get beat up, I was going to get beat up. [I] chased him upstairs and somehow he must have known I was serious this time because he ran away. It was the first time he ever ran away. He went to my mom and step-dad's room. It had a lock on the door and he locked the door. [I was] pounding on the door and kicking the door, "Come on, come out!" [I] kicked the door and kicked this hole in the door. I was like, "Oh my God. I am going to be killed when Mom gets home." So I was just like, "Look what you made me do!" and went to my room and cried...*

Due to this fight, Amy's parents were made aware of the situation that was going on with their children. Fred was punished for the incident by being sent to his room. However, despite this episode, Amy continued to keep his abusive behaviour a secret from her parents, as she believed it would not change anything if they knew.

> *...my dad never knew, as far as I know. When my dad was around my brother was completely focussed on, as we all were, how to keep my dad from...abusing us. We basically were walking around on eggshells. We didn't really have any sibling communication or anything going on... My mom, I just remember that she was at work a lot, and so for the most part of the day there was just no adult around. We'd get home from school... probably by about 3:00, and she didn't get home until 6:00 or 6:30. Most of the conflict was between those hours after school. I never told on him or anything like that. My mom is kind of a small woman...and my older brother would have physical... confrontations with her. So, I just don't think that she could have done anything about it if she had known. At the time, I knew I had to get by. "This is the way it is. He's out of control. Mom can't help."*

When Amy and Fred were still in junior high, their lifestyle changed drastically. Fred had an argument with their mother and decided to go and live with their father. Shortly after this, Jack ran away from home and ended up following Fred to their father's house. Amy was left with a decision to make.

> *...and so, I was left there. My mom had a big house. I had this big house to myself, not be picked on, it was going to be really cool. But I moved in with my dad because I felt that my brothers and I should stick together regardless of the bad situation with him. I remember, I even wrote on a piece of paper two columns... reasons why I should stay here at Mom's and reasons why I should go*

> *to Dad's. [There was a] huge list of why I should stay at Mom's. Freedom and everything else and just one thing on my dad's side which was to stick together with my brothers. I felt like I didn't have a choice. I had to move. I knew I had to. I felt like if I didn't, I would lose my brothers. Moving in with my dad meant a two bedroom apartment for four people and living with him and getting picked on and stuff. So it was like, I felt like I've got to make this sacrifice... for when we grow up or whatever. I don't really understand why I felt that way...before I even moved in with my dad I knew it would be the worst time of my life, and it was.*

After moving into her father's house, the level of conflict between Amy and Fred did not change. Things were "the same", except for being in a "very small area." The form of the conflict changed somewhat, as there were different things that would bother Amy.

> *...it seemed that the conflict, the degree of the seriousness, didn't really go down. It just changed into different levels, I guess, just because we were getting older and there were different things that would bother me. We didn't really hit as much when we were older. I guess we knew we really could hurt each other if we hit each other.*

After moving in with her father, Amy had to deal with her father's abuse as well as her brother's. She was so completely focussed on just surviving through it all that her life was almost a blur to her.

> *...it was like I wasn't even aware of what was going on. I was totally just trying to survive and now I feel that I really missed out on a lot...because I was just trying to get by. I'll see old friends of mine... from junior high or grade school, and they'll remember things about me or what I did or said that I don't remember. I don't remember at all.*

Amy coped with this situation by living for the future and planning for her escape. She was just waiting to be old enough to move out and trying to make herself self-sufficient, so that she could move out of her father's house as soon as possible.

> *...living with him, I kept planning ahead. Just [thinking], "Okay, I'm going to college. So as soon as I know what college, I can start planning to move out of here and be free," and, so, birthdays and holidays, like Christmas, I asked for gifts that would make me self-sufficient soon. I would ask for a set of dishes. Here I am in high school, when I was 16 years old, wanting a set of dishes and I wanted glasses and appliances and stuff. I'm actually quite amazed that I was able to pull that off because to me it was pretty obvious that, "Oh, this kid is planning to move out as soon as she's 18 or as soon as she can."*

As soon as she was able to leave, she went away to college and did not have any contact with Fred for almost two years.

> *...when I went to college...I was across the state...we didn't see each other. It was probably a year and a half, or maybe two years, where I didn't write to him or anything...I can only guess at what he's thinking and everything, but for me, I sort of purposefully didn't go out of my way to call or anything because I was just sick of his treatment. [Of] the way he treated me.*

When Amy and Fred did see each other again, it was quite awkward for the two of them. However, Amy realized that things had changed somewhat between them since their separation. Although she wasn't sure of why this occurred, she hoped that he had come to some sort of realization about the way he had treated her in childhood and adolescence.

> *...after that... he would hardly look at me. He wouldn't even say hi or anything like that. So, it was just like, neither of us knew how to react to one another. We didn't know how to behave around each other. So we just kind of avoided each other. I almost wonder if during that time, he thought, "Gee, maybe she's mad at me." Or even if he thought about it, I don't know, but it seems like... before and after that time period things had changed.*

Since that time, Fred has continued to do things to hurt Amy. Although the form of the maltreatment has changed since they were children, he does things to her that she feels are thoughtless and inconsiderate.

> *...I got married... in 1992 and he didn't come to my wedding. The same day... his friend was getting married and my brother was the best man. I didn't know this until the week before. So he got mad at me for having my wedding on the same day that he was busy. He was really mad about that. Like it was all my fault. That I had purposefully planned my wedding to be on the same day that he was in this other wedding so he couldn't go or whatever. I was just [thinking], "Man, that's really crazy" (laughs). It's just insane that he could think that. So then I thought, "Well, he can be mad. That's fine." But in my opinion... [he could] go and be the best man and then come to my reception. At least show up. But he didn't... I can laugh at it [now] because it's just crazy, but it was upsetting.*

And another time

> *I remember my birthday last year. My birthday party was at Planet Hollywood and I just invited anybody. Relatives, friends in the city... So he came to that and we had to wait in line for two hours or something to get in. He was really mad. It had to be my birthday dinner because he had a new truck and his truck was acting up or something. So he was mad at me for having my birthday [dinner], heaven forbid, on my birthday (laughs) inconveniently for him... He stayed and had the meal and everything, but he was mad. That's typical of him to get angry and misplace it to somebody totally unrelated to his problem... My mom, even when we were kids, she'd always say that he thinks the world is against him. [He thought] everybody was against him, which is not the case, but even today... when bad things happen he thinks that people are purposefully trying to hurt him.*

Amy has also noticed that Fred treats his girlfriends in a similar way to the way that he treated her while they were growing up. Although this treatment is less severe than the treatment Amy received from him, she thinks that it is still hurtful and destructive.

> *...he has had girlfriends...and...he's had two long-term relationships. One he's still in. But both of them... he picks on these women and he picks on them. He's constantly picking on them. He laughs at that, but it's a lot of the same [treatment that I had]. It's all in fun now, or at least, it's how he has fun, I guess. So, he's not cruel or anything, but he's always teasing and picking on them...I totally feel for this girl. The one now, I just think, "I should just tell her.*

> *I would not put up with that." He does that with everyone that he dated. I don't know how they handle it. If I was them I couldn't...*

At the present time, Amy and Fred do have a relationship and are in contact with one another. They see each other occasionally and spend some time together. However, Amy feels that the relationship is not very deep, as they never talk about anything that has any meaning for her. She has tried to make the move to be closer to him, but has not received a very warm response from him. So their relationship continues to be superficial. Amy is hurt by this, as she would like to have a close relationship with her brother, but she feels as though he is incapable of giving her what she needs.

> *...even now we don't really talk much or see each other much...We never talk about anything meaningful, but we kind of chat about this or that and...now, as adults, we're polite to each other and nice to each other and things are fine... It has always been a really sketchy kind of relationship where we don't talk much, we don't see each other much...There was one time where I kind of just decided, "Okay, we usually walk into the room. We don't know what to say. We don't look at each other, and we might say hi and look away. I'm going to hug him and see what he does" (laughs). So I did, and it was just like he was this stiff... it was really weird. I may get the courage to try and hug him again, but it's just such a weird feeling that I usually don't. But now we definitely say, "Hi. How's it going?" Still, we don't talk about anything meaningful. He has a new dog, so we talk about the dog. It's sort of trivial stuff... I just think that his personality is just so deeply affected by... his childhood, that it's just so hard for him to show kindness or love...... So I feel ...really sad for him (crying)...what's really sad is that I know that I can't help him...*

There was one time when Fred showed kindness and love to Amy, which was extremely surprising to her.

> *The one time that I was just amazed that it was him on the other end of the phone saying these things was when I got divorced... It was really upsetting and my brother actually called me... It was like a different person. He was saying... I just don't know how to describe it. He was trying to help. He was saying nice things. Trying to make me feel better. Try[ing] to help me get through it. But it was just bizarre... That just happened that one time.*

When Amy thinks back about the treatment she received from her brother, she doesn't hesitate to call it "abuse". She feels that both the physical and emotional maltreatment was excessive, with some of the negative effects, such as a lowered self-esteem, lasting into adulthood.

> *I think kids, obviously they're going to have sibling rivalry and conflicts and stuff, but I think the punching and stuff that he did was more...abuse than what I would think would be normal. I figured that if it hurt, that was too much (laughs). Being cruel, that was too much. He didn't need to be cruel... I think that he did emotionally abuse me just because in some ways it affects me now negatively... mainly when certain things come up I don't really feel sure of myself... Like the constantly putting me down and telling me I wasn't good at things that I thought I was good at, 'cause he'd say, "You suck," or "You're fat," or whatever. So, I question myself probably more than I would have if I hadn't lived with that...all the time.*

Over the years, Amy has tried to analyze her relationship with Fred and try to figure out why he would treat her so cruelly. She has come to the conclusion that the main reason why the abuse occurred was because of their father and the pressure that they were under due to the abuse that they received from him. Although it is unfortunate that Fred took his frustrations out on Amy, she has come to a point where she sympathizes with Fred and what he was going through while they were growing up. Despite his maltreatment, Amy believes that she and her two brothers managed to provide a sense of support and unity to one another throughout the family problems they were experiencing.

> *I feel...sorry for him. He was trying to survive. He did the best he could 'cause that's what I was trying to do. We just had different ways of dealing with it... He did make it worse for me, but...I don't blame him for it...... He was trying to get by. He didn't know any other way. I always felt like he had it worse than I did because he had all that pressure from my dad... It's almost like my dad tried to...make my brother his little...extension. I know that the way I was behaving back then was directly related to what my father had convinced me of, and so, if my brother had even more pressure, more... instilled in him, I can only imagine how difficult that was for him. So I just feel more compassion for him than anger... Having to survive...having a father like we had...we each...have our*

> *own problems and we're all trying to deal with it. I tend to blame everything on my dad. I've thought about this a lot and I don't know if it's really just... a different frame of mind now, but...I always felt like we were sticking together... He was really mean and this and that, but I don't know. It just felt like we were sticking together. There wasn't a lot of positive stuff. But...there was still two other people [Fred and Jack] who could understand what I was going through.*

Amy has finally reached a point where she has become fed up with going over and over her relationship with Fred and has come to a place where she does not want to examine the past any further.

> *...I've thought about it so much over my life that I don't see any point of trying to figure it out anymore... I used to always try to always figure everything out... Psychoanalyze everything. Try to figure out everybody else's intentions. Now I just don't worry about it and see what happens... Trying to figure out the specific why's is not of use to me.*

Thus, although Amy has moved on with her life and continued on in adulthood without bridging the distance with Fred, it seems as though they are slowly moving towards a more fulfilling relationship. By taking small steps, such as by offering a hug when they meet, or phoning to provide support during crises, Amy and Fred have both taken small moves to become closer.

> *I hadn't really thought about...whether things had changed...but, maybe a little bit. Maybe things have gotten a little better...*

Perhaps Amy and Fred will continue to move towards having a closer relationship. Or perhaps Amy will decide that she does not want to take the initiative after all that he put her through while growing up. Whatever the outcome, Amy has recognized that it is up to her, and that she has a choice in the matter.

> *...if I want to have a better relationship with my brother then...it really depends on, I would think, most of it depends on me (laughs). At least I feel that it does because my brother is not one to reach out. He's not the first person to initiate something. So, if I initiate something and really work hard on hugging him*

> *every time that I saw him or trying to talk about...more meaningful things, I could, but I just... I just... I just don't feel like doing that right now.*

Thus, Amy recognizes that the abuse is a thing of the past and that she must look towards the future.

> *I just try to look at it more the big picture. We were trying to survive a bad situation and it's no longer that bad situation and so...go from here...*

Margaret's Story

Margaret comes from a large family and has six brothers and sisters. The eldest sibling is a boy, followed by a girl named Stacey. Then there were three girls born in the middle, with Margaret being the youngest of the three. After a five year gap, Margaret's parents had another boy, followed by another girl. Margaret feels that her parents favored the eldest two and the youngest two children the most and the three girls in the middle were treated as though they were unimportant. Margaret found out in adulthood that three of the other children were not her father's; one of these children was Stacey. Margaret was also told in adulthood that Stacey was being sexually abused by a family member.

> *I can see where Stacey had a lot of problems. I think now I was the one she took her frustration out on... When you think about it, you can see that she needed to take it out on somebody. But why me? I was the only one that she hit... and I don't know why it was me.*

Margaret believes that some of the problems between her and Stacey may have arisen because of the personal problems Stacey was experiencing, as well as jealousy about Margaret's relationship with their father. Margaret also got a lot of attention from being the youngest child for five years, before the other two children were born.

> *...I think a lot of it had to do with...my dad liked me and she couldn't handle that. My dad really liked me. I've always been my dad's favorite. I remember her saying one time, "I want to have the same relationship with Dad as you do."*

> *...I was the baby for five years. I got a lot of attention. She probably didn't like that. She was always somebody who needed... all the attention all the time. So the minute somebody else got the attention, she would react in some way.*

Since Stacey was the oldest female in the family, she was often left in charge while the children's parents were at work. She was four years older than Margaret and would tell her what to do and how to do it.

> *She was the older sister, so she was largely in control. My mom and dad gave her that control... So my sister had total control over the household when my mom and dad were working... She liked being the boss...*

There were several occasions where Stacey would tell Margaret what to do, and if it was not done the way Stacey wanted, she would become very angry and physically attack Margaret. On one occasion...

> *There was this kind of machine you...[used] to cut potato chips...french fries. I didn't like using that machine, so I just used a knife. But she got so angry at me that I didn't do it the way she wanted me to do it that she threw that thing [the machine] at my head, right here (points to a scar on her lip).*

And another time,

> *....there were seven kids in our family, so one loaf of bread had to do for everybody and I cut the bread too thick. Well, it was the first time I had ever cut bread. I didn't put it on the breadboard right, so she took the breadboard and beat it up on my head and I had to go to the hospital. I had a concussion. I still have the scar on my head too. It [the breadboard] split in half.*

Stacey would also do things to Margaret that were manipulative and cruel. For example, she would tell Stacey that if she did something for her she would let her have some sort of privilege, such as using her bike or her roller skates. However, she would not help her to learn how to use the roller skates, so that she would fall down and hurt herself.

> *...she would say... "If you do this, I will let you have my bike for a while." [Another time], I don't know what it was I did, but I got to sit on her roller skates. So that was a way of her being nice, and then, of course, I would be happy that she was nice to me, but at the same time, I was on her roller skates [and] she knew darn well that I was going to fall. You would have thought that she would have held me up or something, and [say], "This is how you do it." But no. She pushed me [instead] and of course I fell and scraped my knees and things...*

Margaret states that Stacey's behavior was done as a way to "torment" her. They shared a bedroom, and at night, Stacey would tell her that she was going to get her into trouble with their parents if she did not do certain things. She also tormented her by throwing her into a pool when she did not know how to swim.

> *...she had swimming lessons...and to show us how to swim she would throw us in the water... We'd be okay, but she wasn't there to help. I couldn't swim. This is when I was six or seven. [She] threw me in the water. I remember the drowning feeling. I remember it very distinctly. I can remember the pool. [She] just grabbed me up. "This is how you learn to swim," she said. One of the lifeguards [saved me]. To this day I'm scared of water. I will not go in the water.*

Margaret remembers much of the physical maltreatment she received from her sister. However, she also believes that she has "blocked a lot of it out" as she knows that the physical maltreatment occurred on a regular basis, but cannot recall specific events.

> *...it's the violence that I remember the most. I think I sort of...I closed the door to it... I remember some slaps and some...kicks here and there and so forth. I think that maybe some of this is so painful that I've blocked it out. It must be 'cause there were quite a few incidents of physical abuse but I don't remember all of it. I remember one time she pulled my hair out. I remember that now...she pulled my hair out and that hurts. That really hurts... My brother mentioned something about one time, we were...in a forest, and I don't remember this, but we were in a forest picking mushrooms and she threw me off the bike... I think I was on my brother's bike... on the back... and she went past and she just pushed me right off. I didn't remember that at all. So I think I've blocked out things...*

In addition to the physical maltreatment Margaret was experiencing, there was also verbal maltreatment, in the form of teasing, name-calling, and put downs.

> *I was very little. I was really skinny in those days. I was always sick. I had very serious kidney problems when I was a child and I remember being in the hospital for six months... She always used to call me Puny because I was always sickly and very skinny...really skinny arms...and I was always pale, and she always used to call me Whitey. The verbal abuse was pretty well all the time.*

One of the things that may have contributed to the problem may have been Margaret's tendency to stand up for herself and try to do things her own way. If her way of doing things clashed with Stacey's way, then Stacey would become abusive. As Margaret reached adolescence, she became even more independent. At times she questions if perhaps she may be to blame for the treatment she received from her sister, simply because she was so independent.

> *The worst of it [the maltreatment]...I was 12, 13, 14. I was becoming independent... She didn't like it. I stood up for myself. She didn't like that at all. She wanted complete, total obedience... I did stand up to her. I guess that's what it was that bothered her. "How dare I..." So, I don't know. Maybe it's partially me too... that [I was saying] "I'll show you." Maybe it's independence. Sometimes I wonder if I wasn't really a bitch too... I don't think I deserved some of the stuff that happened, but at the same time, and I guess this is the victim talking now: "Is it my fault?" 'Cause I know victims think it's always their fault. But, maybe if I wasn't so lippy? If I wasn't so independent? If I had just gone along with her stuff then nothing would have happened?*

Another issue that arose at this time was that Stacey was diagnosed as having an intellectual delay and was told that she would not progress beyond the mentality of an adolescent. Thus, much of her behavior was immature and lacked common sense.

> *...when she was 16, 17 she was diagnosed by psychiatrists as never getting past the mentality of a 16 year old... She would be embarrassing to be around. She would go to a store. An antique store, for example, and she would say to the guy, "Well, if I give you a blow job, will you give me a lesser price?" She was really into a...I would say into an unreal world. She would get a...kernel of truth in her head and twist it to suit her own...view of it and that, of course,*

> *would hurt people. I think she did definitely have mental problems and she regressed over the years.*

Margaret did not feel safe going to her parents about the maltreatment she was receiving from her sister. Her mother and Stacey were very close, and Margaret did not feel that her mother would take her side or believe her over Stacey.

> *...she's my mom's favorite and so I was always sort of like the black sheep. [When Stacey cut my lip with the cutting machine] I remember my mom saying, "What's wrong with your lip?" I said, "Oh, it's nothing," 'cause I knew...my mom would have taken her side anyway. I was always the bad guy. And [Stacey] knew I wouldn't say anything [to our parents].*

Margaret's parents were also physically abusive towards the children in the family, which contributed to Margaret's reluctance to tell them about Stacey's maltreatment of her.

> *...there was a lot of physical abuse going on in that family. It wasn't just my sister. It was my parents as well. One time I charged a Mars bar in a store. It was 25 cents, which was a lot of money back then. When the lady came to collect the money, my parents didn't know about it. She never should have sold it to me in the first place... They identified it as me and my dad really beat me up...so hard. It was awful.*

> *I remember with my mom one time when I said something and she just slapped me across the face. She did it in front of people as well. At my sister's wedding, she slapped me in the face. I was a bridesmaid, so that hand print shows in all the pictures.*

> *...it's not just physical. There was mental abuse in there... always negative. There was never anything positive in our household. I don't remember birthday parties. I don't remember little things my mom did for me. She never said she loved me. My sister never said she loved me. She never said she hated me either, but... actions speak louder than words.*

Since Margaret lived in such an abusive environment, she assumed that it was normal and that other children experienced the same sort of maltreatment from their family members.

> *I thought it was normal. I think a lot of kids feel, when they're abused like that, they think it's normal... I went along with whatever [happened] because it was expected... You just don't think that it's not normal. When I was a kid I just didn't deal with it. But what could I have done? Who could I have gone to? [I thought] I must have been so bad that I deserved it. 'Cause you don't think it could be your parents, or... it shouldn't be your older sister. I mean, you had to respect your older sister, didn't you? Well, that was what I thought. "She's my older sister. She knows better. She's the boss. She's looking after me and I did this wrong and I should have done it the way she wanted me to." I still don't know if it was normal or abnormal or what.*

In order to cope with Stacey's treatment of her, Margaret would go to her extended family for support and reassurance that she was not a bad person. She also was close to one of her other sisters and was able to rely on her for some support as well.

> *...I always thought, "Well, I'm so bad. I'm so awful," and then I met aunts and uncles who said, "No, you're not awful." I think that the support I had from my aunts and uncles... [showed me] that I was okay. I wasn't a bad person. I felt loved there. I didn't feel loved at home. Not even by my dad because it wasn't shown. Nobody ever said "Sweetheart" or loving, kind words or "You did well" or whatever. It was always negative. My mother used to be quite ill and go into hospitals and I'd go to my auntie's house. She had a special bed and she came up and gave me hugs and kisses at night. This was unheard of in our home... She would have breakfast ready. Breakfast! Ready! With butter and marmalade and jam. We didn't have that at our house because there was no money for it with all those kids and there was just my aunt and her husband. So every time I see marmalade I think of my auntie... They treated me like a human being... I just felt loved there. You walked in and they would be happy to see you and [say], "Hi. Are you having a nice day?" and "How was school?" I would go there once a day 'cause my school was close to their place and I would stop there on the way home or after school. After supper I'd wander down to my aunt's place and they were always happy to see me. [And] I had my sister. The one that I'm still close to. We shared a bed and we made up our own language and stuff like that. We were always close...*

Stacey tried to create rifts between Margaret and other family members by telling them stories about her and trying to make them think she was the "bad guy."

> *...she would go to my dad and go, "These are the stories..." [and] other family members she did all these sorts of things to, where she'd [say], "Well, Margaret this and Margaret that..." One of the things that my [other] sister did say is that, "Yeah, she always turned everybody against you." If I had said to my mom, "Well, Stacey did this, this, this," they wouldn't have believed me... 'cause she had them around her little finger. All these stories would come up of how terrible I've been and all that... She was the victim and everybody else was the bad guy and I was the worst bad guy...*

When Stacey was 16, she moved out of the family household. Margaret continued to have a relationship with her into adulthood, although their contact with one another was sporadic and interspersed with long periods of time in which the two sisters would not talk to one another.

> *...we didn't talk for years. It was probably in blocks. You know, four or five year blocks where we didn't talk. I left home at 18 and then I didn't talk to the family for five years and then I got into a fight with my mom and we didn't talk again for maybe three years and on and on like that.*

Margaret believes that their relationship continued to be negative in adulthood because she became even more independent as she got older. She went on to marry a good husband and have four children, and she also completed her doctorate degree. The jealousy that her success may have created was further heightened by the fact that Stacey had a very difficult life, with many problems and personal failures.

> *...I'm an independent spirit. I didn't follow the crowd. I think... one of the reasons why I've become so independent and...an overachiever [is] to prove myself... I did what I wanted despite them.*
>
> *It was really a sad story... her [Stacey's] life. She had a child... Then she got married and that didn't work, but she got pregnant by...a neighbour, and that child was given up for adoption. Then she married another fellow... but he died. Then she met another fellow who was a wonderful person. He just*

> *rescued her from the whole mess she was in. Then she dumped him and got involved with somebody who's 77 years old... She lost her first son to AIDS. Her second son she just met again... I think Stacey's story was really sad... She wasn't happy in her own skin...she's even said that.*

> *...I think a lot of it was jealousy that she didn't get to where I did...she did say to somebody once that [I] had a perfect life, and I do. I'm happy. Not because I have the Ph.D... I have debts just like anybody else. I'm happy because I'm happy. She doesn't have that contentment. That inner peace... She could never get it and I think that's probably her problem in life.*

A few years ago, their mother had to be put into a nursing home as she was suffering from Alzheimer's. Margaret took over most of the responsibility of looking after her, while Stacey did not take the time to visit or help the family. Margaret feels a great deal of resentment for Stacey's lack of care for their mother. Just before her death, Margaret's mother finally realized that Margaret was not the "bad guy" in the family. However, Margaret feels that this realization came too late.

> *...when my mom needed help and she was diagnosed, I said to my sister [Patricia], "Why don't we make a schedule and you go one night, I go the next, and Stacey goes another night, and then somebody else goes..." We used to have to feed Mom. We had to help her 'cause my dad would go at lunchtime and the nurses would feed her in the morning. [But] I was the one looking after her... It was me. I was the one who went to the hospital every day. So I would phone... Stacey and say, "Well, mom did this and this and this. When are you coming to visit?" [She'd say], "Oh, I'm too busy. I'm working." She lived out in [the suburbs]. That was her excuse. The whole time my mom was in that nursing home, three years, she visited her maybe five or six times... She says, "Well, I was working." Well, so was I... Right before my mom died, about six months before... she [my mom] says, "Fancy you ending up being the best daughter." Now, I didn't take that very kindly. I mean, she meant it as a compliment, but I didn't see it that way.*

There were also disputes regarding their mother's funeral. Once again, as a result of the conflict between Margaret and Stacey, they did not speak for several years.

> *When my mom died...one way [for Stacey] to get back at my mom was not to get my mom the coffin she had asked for in her will and that she had paid for. I didn't really want to argue... We decided to cremate her after all. [Afterwards], we had my mom's ashes sitting in my house for a while. We just couldn't part with her. My sister said, "Well, I'd like to take her home." So she took her home and took the ashes out and gave them to people. And then she turned it around to other people and [made me look bad by saying], "Well, Margaret wants you to have this." ...[She did that] just to get that final little dig in at somebody.*

Following this incident, Stacey reached a point in her life where she was having many financial and personal difficulties and needed somebody to take her in. Despite the problems they had been having with one another, Margaret offered to take Stacey into her home. Margaret felt that it was her responsibility as a sister to help Stacey in her time of need.

> *...I took her in because Stan, this was her second last [husband], is a real sweetheart. But he was at his wits end. He couldn't do anymore. Stan said [to Stacey], "Nobody else will take you in." So she phoned me up [and said], "Margaret, will you take me in?" ...So I said, "Of course." I really felt that... she's not mentally ill, but not developed... Aren't you supposed to help each other? Isn't that what family's about?*

Stacey stayed with Margaret for three months. During this time, Margaret was attending university and working on her Ph.D. She found it extremely difficult to have Stacey in her home, as she seemed to need constant attention. She also wanted Margaret to break her daughter's confidence and tell her secrets that Margaret and her daughter shared. After Margaret would not give in to Stacey's demands, she left the home.

> *...we were friendly for a while. She lived at my place for a couple of months and everything. But she didn't get all the attention 'cause I was going to school and getting my Ph.D. On my days off... I would have to sit there and talk to her the whole time with tears coming down her face...she would sit there and we would talk for hours and hours and hours, like I was a therapist or something... The next day would be another day off and I'd want to do stuff and she'd want to sit and talk again. Then when I wouldn't tell her what my schedule was she got*

> *really upset. [And] I just didn't share things with her. My daughter, for example, said [to me], "Mom, I'm going to tell you something, but I don't want you to tell anybody else." Fine....[but] my sister got really angry and said, "I'm your sister. You're supposed to tell me...the stuff that people tell you." I said, "No. When somebody tells me something and I promise to keep quiet..." I'm not going to go against my daughter to my sister. She just couldn't comprehend that. So, that's one of the reasons why she left... I think [another] reason she left is that she didn't get the attention she wanted...like a hundred percent attention. But she just couldn't get it. We didn't leave on good terms and I still don't know what I did wrong. But I wasn't going to pursue her. I didn't want to give her that satisfaction [by saying], "What did I do wrong? What can I do to make you happy here?" When she left, that was it. We didn't talk ever since.*

Even though there were always difficulties between Margaret and Stacey, there were also a lot of positive aspects to their relationship. In the times when they were talking to one another, they did a lot of fun activities together. This was especially the case when Stacey was staying with Margaret.

> *You have to look at both sides to be balanced. I don't think you can just look at the negative. You have to look at the whole picture. We did do fun things. Sisterly things. She was really very giving. She'd give you the shirt off her back. She did have a good heart despite all her problems. She would plan things for people. She would [say], "Oh, let's have this birthday party for this person..." She was fun. She was a real hoot...her sense of humor was out of this world. We could do a lot of neat stuff together. Like we would go shopping and we would go out to...second hand stores and find some really neat things. [She would say], "Do you like this?" and "Do you think this is nice?" So she would buy me these things. I think she was sort of trying to make up for all those things from the old days, subconsciously... I would sew, and we would go and look at patterns and things. We would have dinners at my house and at her house, and we would play records. It was really fun, but on her terms. It always had to be on her terms. She did do a lot of good things, but the memories of the bad outweigh [the good]... My mom always said, "Don't trust Stacey." I never did... I think because I didn't trust her that sort of put an end to our relationship... Once I decided I wasn't going to play the game anymore, she left and went out of my life.*

Some time after Stacey had moved out, Margaret discovered that while she had been staying with her, she had gone through Margaret's belongings when she was not home and had taken some of the items Margaret had inherited when their mother had passed away.

> *...when my mom died I didn't want anything...[except] I did want a dish that my mom had had on the table all during her life. It had been an engagement gift and she put candies in it, and I wanted a pudding bowl. A white pudding bowl. It was also an engagement gift... So I really had sentimental attachments to these dishes... Stacey got my mom's fur coat. She got my mom's dishes...whatever she wanted...the diamond rings. All that stuff. So, I went to her [Stacey's] home...[and] there were those dishes. I realize now...when I was away at school...she went through all my stuff because those two dishes were in boxes in the basement. So she went through my stuff and took all those. Whatever she wanted, she took. Taken from my house. And that's all I wanted...*

When Margaret reflects back on her relationship with Stacey, she realizes that her family is now divided, without many close relationships between family members. She attributes a lot of this to Stacey's behavior, and the manner in which she tried to convince the other family members that Margaret was the "bad guy." She feels as though she was never really a part of that family and has managed to build her own "family" out of friends, aunts and uncles, and cousins.

> *...it still bothers me that the family is split because of all this... It would be nice to be friendly with all my brothers and sisters, but I don't trust them. So what's the point? My eldest brother, I do talk to him when I have to. We speak, but we don't socialize... Not because we don't want to. It's just too much water under the bridge. If some people want to... accept some people's [Stacey's] versions [of a story] so readily without checking them out, then do I really want to be associated with them? They've come to the realization too late that it wasn't me. That I wasn't the black sheep. It's too late.*
>
> *There's an old picture of us at Christmas, and I'm in the middle, but I stand apart from everybody...separated from them all. That's very telling, isn't it? I've got a bigger family now... a family of friends that truly, truly care for me, than I would have had if it was just my [original] family.*

A few years ago, Stacey passed away. Although, the cause of the death seems to have been accidental, Margaret believes that it may have been a suicide.

> *...we think she committed suicide. It's probably accidental, but I don't know how many times she tried to commit suicide. She used drugs and that's what killed her in the end. She had something like 10 or 12 different drugs in her system, all overdosed. She was only 50 when she died... and what has she left behind? She leaves a really sad legacy, I think, because... what's there? I'm not gloating that she's dead, but what [has she] done to [her]self? Her reputation is in shreds, whereas mine isn't. So I feel like I've won, but then I feel guilty that I'm thinking that... When she died, what did my dad say? He says, "I'm glad [she died] because she can never hurt you anymore." I think [that's] very telling...*

Margaret helped Stacey's ex-husband with the burial of Stacey, even going so far as to help dig the grave. She used this experience as a way to say good-bye to Stacey, and to try to let go of all the negative feelings about their relationship. There are times when she still thinks about Stacey. Despite all of the problems that they had with one another, Margaret has come to a certain peace about their relationship. She does not blame herself for the maltreatment she received, as she realizes that it was Stacey who had the problem. There are even times when she finds herself missing her sister.

> *...I couldn't let Stan do it [the burial] himself and I somehow felt I owed her. Don't ask me why. She was my sister... They had bought a burial plot... and Stan and I buried her... I dug the grave with Stan... and when we did that I said good-bye to her. With that burial I said, "Well, good-bye Stacey. Have a safe journey. I hope things are better for you where-ever you're going." [I've realized that] she was the one with the problems. It wasn't me, which is... not a nice thing to say, but it was true. She was the one with the problems. So, in a way, I miss her...*

When Margaret reflects on her experiences with her family and her sister, she can identify several things that she has learned from her experiences. She has been able to find positives out of the negative events of her relationship with Stacey. If she were given an opportunity to change the past, she would not change anything, as these events have led to the person she has become today. However, if she could change anything about her family life, she would make it more positive and emotionally fulfilling. She would also change the mental problems that Stacey was suffering from.

> *...I think [I learned] to be more accepting of people because she wasn't accepting of me...and I also learned to be accepting of people who have a mental illness. She just wasn't well, that's all. How can you hold that against somebody? If somebody's mentally ill, is that their fault? I don't think you can hold that against somebody. I think I learn[ed] to forgive and put it behind [me] and go on. I think that's... what I've learned. I think one of the worst things is to let it fester and fester and fester, and it just eats you up into little bits. Life is too short for that.*

> *...would I change anything? I don't know... To have a more loving family, so that things were openly discussed and to not have the favouritism and the mental abuse. But really I think it's one of the things that have made me stronger. So I don't know if I would change anything...because then would I be that close to my aunts and uncles? I have a very good relationship with my [other] sister, which outweighs losing the others. I wish Stacey hadn't been mentally ill. That's what I wish. That we could have had a more normal life. Some good did come of it... [but] the warm emotional stuff that was lacking would have been nice. More emotional support. I knew I was loved, but not by my family.*

When she thinks about her own definition of abuse, Margaret expresses some confusion over whether the treatment she received from her sister could be labeled as being abusive. This is largely due to the times in which the treatment occurred. According to Margaret, such treatment was considered "normal" while she was growing up. However, looking back at how she was treated, she can see that if one uses more current definitions of abuse, then the treatment she received from her sister would be considered to be abusive.

> *I don't know if beating the hell out of somebody is abuse because when I was brought up, that was normal. My sister tried to keep me in tow. So, was that abuse? Today we define it as physical abuse, but at the time, I don't know. I don't know if she meant to be abusive. I think she just lost her control. Somebody else would say, "Well, that was abuse." ...It's a hard thing to say... Looking at it, at the scene, I can just see it very clearly in the kitchen. Her hitting me with the breadboard... she lost control over a situation. That's how she lashed out. For her that probably wasn't abuse. That was control. At the time though, honestly, I didn't think of it as abuse. But, looking back...well, yes, it was abuse.*

Margaret went even further with saying good-bye to her past, and went back to her hometown in order to put it all behind her. She has "turned the page" on this part of her life, and is ready to go on into the future.

> *...I went there with one of my cousins. I walked through the town: the house my grandparents [lived in]...ours, where I was born, my school, my aunt and uncle's place, and where my grandparents are buried, and I just said good-bye. This is the last time I'm coming here and I'm turning the page. It took me three hours to walk around the town and say good-bye and walk back and I haven't been back since and I don't care if I ever go back. I don't need to. That time of my life is over. I don't want to think about it. When I finally said good-bye to it all, I said good-bye to it.*

Bob's story.

Bob grew up in a small town with his parents and three other siblings. He has an older brother, and two younger sisters. His one sister, Betty, is two years younger than him. When they were children, they got along quite well. The family went on trips together and did a lot of activities together. However, when Bob and Betty reached adolescence, their relationship began to change.

> *We [the family] were fairly, quote, normal, I guess. We had fun. We went on some camping trips together... in the summer we did some swimming... When we were 5 and 6 or younger we'd [Betty and Bob] play together quite a bit because there's not a whole bunch of other people around the same age. We got along quite well. But it was near or around that age [12 or 13] where this... change in attitude... started to occur. It's interesting to look back and try to see the pivotal point when the friendly nature and play was there, to [her thinking], "Well, this guy's okay, but he's kind of a toad." That's sort of what I feel her perspective is.*

When Betty was 12 or 13 years of age, she began to become more competitive with Bob. She also began to become more antagonistic and argumentative and would try to get Bob into trouble with their parents.

> *...the real root of the problem started happening right around her coming of age and adolescence for her... right around age 12... she hadn't quite reached puberty yet, but she was almost on the verge of that... There was probably something way back at that point that somehow changed in her mind. There was starting to be a little bit of a competitive nature there. It went from friendly and helpful and... nice, to a little bit more competitive, somewhat belligerent, and at that time... she would start to do things to annoy me or get me in trouble on purpose. She would set things up for me in such a manner that when my mom would come around the corner, [Betty would say], "Ooh, look what Bob did!" and then I'd try to explain, but by that time I was in so much doo-doo that anything I would say my mom would think would be an attempt to get out of trouble. She did that several times and some resentment had built up from that.*

While growing up, Bob believed that Betty was more able than he was to read their parents' reactions and was able to use this knowledge to set Bob up so that he would get into trouble. She would plan situations so that Bob would get caught in an act of which she knew their parents would not approve. She also manipulated their parents into believing that Bob was the one to blame, even when both of them had been involved in the situation.

> *...she definitely had...better ideas of how...the parental system worked than I did. Just more or less because I didn't really care about that. I was like, "Hey, I'm just out here playing. I don't care." It was really frustrating for me to... try to get back at my sister because she knew how Mom thought and... more or less had Mom's personality somewhat figured out whereas I had just sort of been oblivious to that and not really thinking about that... My sister had the total picture in mind of how to get Bob into trouble. Sometimes it happened accidentally that she got me in trouble. But then she would always laugh and tease me [and say], "Ha ha!"*

These situations would often arise over trivial matters, such as throwing out a piece of cheese.

> *...I would get the Kraft singles slices of cheese. I thought these were the greatest little things to unwrap. I hate cheese, but I like to unwrap them. So I'd unwrap them and give them to my sister. No problem. I'd peel off about four slices of this and on the fifth one, she didn't want it anymore. So I was like,*

> *"Okay, what do I do with this? I don't want it. We don't have a dog or anything so I can't give it to the dog." ...So I was mushing it up and then it was like, "Okay, well, I've got to throw it away." So I threw it away, and then Betty [yells], "Bob threw out the cheese!" Mom would come up [and say], "What are you doing?" and I was like, "Oh, man!" It's just a fucking piece of cheese. Who cares!? But I'd get in trouble for nothing.*

On other occasions, Betty would exaggerate the truth of the situation so that it would seem as though Bob was doing something that he wasn't. This was often very hurtful to Bob, as he would be playing and having fun with his sister, and then she would twist the story around in order to get him in trouble with their parents. For example...

> *...[I was] probably about 14. You know how you take a knife and you have your hand open on a table, and then you can jab the knife in between your fingers? Well, this was a butter knife, and I put the handle end [down] 'cause I was doing it on my own hand... and I didn't want to stab myself. So I was doing this in between my fingers and then... my sister... she put up her hand and I was doing that with her hand. Occasionally I would snub her finger... just lightly, and it was with the blunt end, so no problem... I started doing it faster and faster and I missed and I whacked her finger. So she starts bawling a blue streak and I'm like, "Oh, God. I know what's coming now." So here comes Dad. He comes up to me and he says, "Hey, what are you kids doing?" and then she would say, "Oh, Bob practically stabbed me with a knife!" I said, "What?" and Dad would just rip into me. She overuses the word "practically" and "stabbed"...that insinuates something totally different. But things like that would get me into trouble. After Dad realized that it wasn't the pointy end, his tone came down. But, my sister didn't tell him it was with the blunt end. A situation like that... was just a fun situation for both of us. However, she turned that situation around to... basically a verbal knife to me and with the backing of a parental figure. To me... I just thought that was so horrible. Here I am having fun with somebody I trust [and] ...like and all of a sudden she turns on me to get me into trouble. It's just... shit like that really aggravated me.*

Bob believes that the reason why his sister would try to get him into trouble was to get attention from the family. He feels some resentment over this, as she would get sympathy and attention from their parents at his expense. He found that his parents rarely took his side in the disputes that he had with his sister.

> *...the competitiveness [and] the attention at the dinner table grew and grew... To me, I was like, "Yeah, well, whatever. I don't care. If you want to be the family clown, go ahead. I don't need that much attention, nor that kind of attention." She does have an ability with people, some people anyway, to somehow make them laugh. If she can do that then they're somehow on her side and they'll always take her side... Occasionally Mom did side with me, but more often than not she sided with my sister. She'd go to my sister's side immediately because I was bigger and what-not and she thought, "Well, okay, Bob beat on her." ...She was jaded that way. She just... automatically goes to that side. Dad was a little more impartial. If he noticed that the logic of the situation was in favor of one person over the other, then that's who he would vie for. There were many times when my sister would be whining or pouting about something and I'd just sit there waiting for the shit to hit the fan and he would come to me and start beaking off about something... If he would have thought about it more deeper, [he] would have realized [I] was right...*

Bob's parents also contributed to the resentment and animosity between Betty and Bob by playing "games" with Bob that made him feel ridiculed as a child. When he was a boy, he believed that girls were "gross" and did not want to be near them. This included his sister. As a joke, his father would hold him down while Betty kissed him. Bob thought this was a cruel joke to play and feels that it only helped to contribute to his resentment of Betty.

> *...around the time that girls had fleas kind of thing... my dad occasionally would pin me down and have my sister come over and kiss me... right on the lips and I was just totally grossed out. I just think that was silly, in a way, for my parents to think that was so cute and to do it repeatedly. It enforced that idea in my sister's head and it... helped me start to resent my sister and to a small part my parents too...*

The majority of the disputes between Bob and Betty were verbal. Since Bob was older and bigger than Betty, she would not attempt to start physical confrontations with him. The verbal maltreatment consisted of times when Betty tried to get Bob in trouble, as well as criticism and put downs.

> *There would be very few [physical] incidents...it would be more verbal attacks 'cause I think she knew better than to try to beat up on me... [It was] more*

> *things like trying to get me into trouble... Or try to... belittle me somehow... She'd [say], "Oh yeah, that's a good one," just in a manner to sort of offend you... At that age [adolescence], [it happened] very frequently. Like almost every day.*

Betty would also try to humiliate Bob by criticizing him to friends of hers and discouraging them from becoming friends with him.

> *...[when she was] 13, 14. She was in junior high and I was just getting out of junior high. At that time she more or less stuck around with her friends. I stuck around with mine. We didn't interact a whole bunch... Occasionally I would go through that area of the school [where she hung out]. I would go and maybe talk to her for a second or I might have an interest in one of her girlfriends and she'd go up to the girlfriend [and say], "Oh, don't bother. That's my brother. He's such a loser." I think the real problem was the fact that she couldn't handle... the fact that... her friend and myself could become friends or boyfriend/girlfriend because then that girl would talk to my sister a little bit about me and my sister did not want to be placed in that situation. She was protecting herself by... trying to eliminate potential friends for me, whether they be male or female. I would always try to be decent and respectful of her and her future... with guys, but I'd say one thing and she'd do the exact opposite... Around the high school years... I thought... at that time she should be grown up enough to let her friends make their own decisions about myself without giving them rose colored glasses, or dark glasses... just let people make up their own minds themselves... 'cause I wouldn't say anything about her to some of my friends 'cause some of my friends said, "Oh, hey, man. Your sister's kind of cute. Maybe you could set me up." I'd say, "Hey, you're on your own." That, to me, was really fair for both of them. But she wouldn't do that. She would adamantly act against any kind of relationship happening...*

When these incidences occurred, Bob would try to stand up for himself, and would argue with Betty. He also made attempts to tell his parents about how Betty was treating him. However, it was discouraging for him, as his parents would minimize the maltreatment Bob was receiving.

> *...I'd argue with her sometimes and I'd try... to get her to see my point of view, but... she'd usually either pout and run off or usually go get Mom to help settle the score. I was... shocked [and] frustrated... to realize that this sister of mine [was] getting away with a bunch of stuff that she shouldn't be. I thought that*

> *was totally unfair. Just unfair. Like, why? I tried [to talk to my parents about it]... but... they were just like, "Oh, go play. Forget about it. Move on. This is not serious."*

A lot of the animosity and resentment has continued on in Bob and Betty's relationship as they have grown older and gone on to university. Betty still desires a great deal of attention and will often demand this attention at Bob's expense. She has also continued to be competitive with him in a variety of ways, such as in academics and sports.

> *...her intense desire to have this attention continues through to this day. What happens now is basically an extension of what grew to be her nature... way back in high school. When she's with her friends or her boyfriend... that intense desire for attention is there. She's willing to say and do just about anything to make sure she's the focus... She starts to... pick on me or say, quote, jokes. The most recent thing she would do is she'd come over... if she's with me one on one, she's okay. She can be okay. But in front of an audience, she has to ham it up. She [will] bug me about, "Oh, your apartment is all messy. What a dump." And really, it wasn't. [She'll say], "Your hair. Your face," or whatever. I just figure she has to be, at the sake of being petty, she tries to grasp the attention. She cares about number one... herself. That's it.*

> *...other people, other friends of mine, have said, "Yeah, your sister treats you differently... and is somewhat competitive." So... that reinforces in my mind... if other people see it too, then what I'm seeing is probably pretty close to the truth. A... recent... example... is snowboarding. I never put... [a] board on before. So we go up and we "run" at this a little bit... and go falling down... but you could really tell that she was putting in a genuine effort to be as good as she could be at that. She would just be staring at me to see, "Okay, what's Bob doing? ...I've got to be able to do that and do it a little bit better." I'm thinking, "Well, go ahead. I don't care..." And... playing raquetball together or something. She'd definitely give it every effort to be as good as me or better. I'm thinking, "It's just a game. Just play it... Don't worry about who's better or who scored..." I think that competitive nature shows up today. She's saying, "I'm so good. I've got this new car. I've got this nice little job. I'm starting to make some money..." I think that my sister does look up to me somewhat and that's why she wants to be better. Which is somewhat flattering, but she would never come up and say that.*

Bob attributes some of Betty's competitiveness and need for attention to their older brother, who has a very similar personality to Betty. Bob believes that she may have learned some of her behaviors and attitudes from him.

> *...I think that some of my sister's craving for attention came from my brother... He is... a classic class clown. Very smart guy. If... in academics he would have really applied himself... he could have really gone places and gotten scholarships and stuff. But... it was more cool to hang out with people and be about average... and have lots of friends, than to be the academic scholar. To a certain degree I think my sister has learned some of that from him 'cause him and her are more alike than... I am to either one of them, which makes sense 'cause they [have] similar personalities.*

Bob believes that many of the problems he is having with his sister arise because the two of them have very different philosophies about life. Bob sees himself as being independent and working hard for his accomplishments, whereas Betty tries to take the easy way out and relies on others to help her reach her goals. Bob uses the analogy of changing a tire to show how he differs from Betty...

> *My idea would be [to] get a jack, jack it up, take a wrench and take off the nuts and do that. Now her mentality would be to go ask Dad to come and help her and basically stand by and get Dad to do it and she goes, "Oh Dad, you're so good looking. You're so strong. Where'd you learn that?" The job gets done either way. But my mentality is that I should be as independent as I possibly can. Learn these things. Sure, I'll ask questions if I need to.*

> *I guess it more or less goes back to being independent. I remember the first day or two of grade one and I was learning how to tie my shoes... and... would fiddle around trying to tie my shoes... I think even then, Mom could see that... I prided my independence rather highly and wanted to do these things for myself and not... take the easy way out and let her tie my shoes all the time.*

Betty has a similar attitude towards her studies in university, which frustrates Bob because he works hard for his accomplishments.

> *...she'll say, "Oh, yeah. This university gig is just a big game." It's like you've got to jump through the hoops. Know the right people. Rub the right shoulders and away it goes for you. She is going to graduate this year with relatively decent grades. I think she obviously had to work for her degree... don't get me wrong. But still, I don't think that the depth... of physical and mental work that she had to go through was at the same level that I go through. Not only for academic purposes, but in life generally. That's the difference between her mentality and mine. She figures that, "If I can figure out an easier way or a simpler way to do things, that's good." And I try to adapt some of that myself...*

Thus, there are some things that Bob has learned from his experiences with his sister. He has been able to adapt some of her "people skills" so that he enjoys life more fully. However, he recognizes that using these social skills should not be used for selfish purposes.

> *Some things I guess I did learn are: how to be more charismatic and giving to the... parental system and to the academic system... [and to] be a little more friendly... For the longest time I was extremely shy and I'd always mumble and not really say too much and kept very, very quiet. I learned that... you can still have your own individual thoughts, but you don't have to be such a... nerd (laughs). You can go out and... have fun and do things and talk to lots of people or enjoy life and I tried that and it... started to work. I thought, "Hey, this is what life's really about and not just burying yourself in your books..." I think it's an important skill to have, that my sister has, but... my point is... don't abuse it. You can use it a bit, but don't abuse it because when it becomes abuse, then... your whole life is fake.*

Bob does not hesitate to classify Betty's maltreatment of him as abuse.

> *...the general definition of abuse... would be... something that someone does or says to make another person feel... disrespected or unwanted or... basically taken advantage of. [What she did was abuse]... more on the verbal end of things.*

If Bob could change the past in any way, he would change his relationship with his sister so that she would have treated him in the way that he treated her so that they would be able to become friends to one another.

> *...I'd rather her treat me as I treated her and with more openness and respect, especially in front of others... because I think that would push her and me into a kind of closer... better kind of sibling relationship [and] to grow as friends...*

Bob has noticed that some aspects of their relationship have changed since him and Betty were adolescents. There are often times when they get together and have fun with one another. However, these times only occur when they are one on one and the maltreatment continues to occur when other people are present. Thus, there is an underlying feeling of resentment and a lack of trust in Bob's relationship with Betty.

> *...[the relationship] changed in the fact that... there is some higher level of respect there... but... it really hasn't evolved much because we haven't spent a whole bunch of time together. I think for any relationship to grow there has to be time spent with each other. There are certain things we can do together one on one... have fun... and that's good 'cause we'll have a good time. She generally has a good heart and tries to do things for other people that are nice. I think that her friends really enjoy her. She can be a lot of fun to be around. She has the capability of being a really nice person... and someone to hang around with. It's just... she hasn't crossed that bridge from... the sibling relationship to a friendship relationship... The thing I resent is the fact that... I never really can fully trust her because I don't know when she's gonna stab me in the back with something. I've narrowed it down to the fact that when she's one on one with me, everything's fine. But when she's in a group...*

These feelings are further heightened by the fact that Bob feels as though Betty takes him for granted and does not put in a genuine effort to be friends with him. For example, she will call him at the last minute on a Friday night to see if he would like to spend time together. Bob feels that this is disrespectful.

> *...there are occasions like Friday night she'll phone me up and say, "Hey, I'm going to go home and do something," or, "Do you want to come out for coffee or something?" It's like, "Oh, what? You couldn't get a date and you have to phone me now? That's okay once in a while, but... I might have made other*

> *plans. If you want to hang out with me, that's cool. I'm not offended by that. But if you want to be more friendly with your brother, then treat him like a friend. Don't treat him like a piece of dog shit and say, 'Oh, well. I... have... ten minutes on my hands. I suppose I'll do the proper thing and give him a call or go and do this.' " No. Screw that... I don't have time for people who treat me like shit...*

Bob has made attempts to get help from his parents in dealing with the situation with his sister. However, when he told them about what was going on, they did not want to get involved. Thus, he realized that it is up to him to solve this problem on his own.

> *...a time not too long ago, like about a year ago, my sister was doing some things to piss me off. I went home to Mom and Dad and said, "Look, I just don't think she's treating me very nicely. How can I... get out of this or help make her see my point of view or stop her from being so negative? I really don't like that." My dad said, "Well, we're not going to just sit here and have you badmouth your sister." I said, "No. I'm not trying to badmouth her... I just want to know how I can help resolve our little issue." He said, "Well, look, I love you both and it's time to go. Our coffee's done." So basically, [he said], "It's your problem. You deal with it." That's basically it. So I guess I'll have to do that.*

Up until now, Bob has been dealing with Betty's treatment of him by ignoring her comments and trying to avoid her. However, he feels that it is time to confront her with how this treatment makes him feel. He believes that he should have told her this a long time ago. Thus, he goes into the future with the hope that Betty will finally realize how poorly she has been treating him and that in time, they will be able to be better friends.

> *I would not respond to that [treatment] just because I don't think that that kind of behavior deserves a response... [or] deserves my attention. Now, she's slowly getting the picture, but... it's gonna take some time. That's the approach I've been taking now, but I think in the near future, if the same situation arises, which it undoubtedly will, that I should do now what I should have done way back then, and say, "Stop it." That's what I should have done... back in the teenage years. Say, "Hey, why are you being such a bitch?" When I talk to her*

> *again and let her know, "Hey, look, you hurt me with all this crap that you're saying." Maybe she'll stop and say, "Oh, God, I didn't realize I was doing that." I suppose my... more or less avoidance or backing away from the "noose" doesn't cure it. It just pushes it aside. I's like having a drink. That might [help you] forget your trouble for the time being, but it doesn't go away until you actually do something about it. And I have to do that. Both for her sake and for mine...*

Jackie's story.

When Jackie was born, there were several complications which occurred during her birth. As a result, her mother did not survive the delivery and Jackie began her life without her mother. She was brought home to her father and her four and a half year old brother, Ryan. For the first five years of her life, she went back and forth between her father and different relatives, who each took turns in raising her. When she was about to start school, she was sent back home to her father. Although life was more stable while living with her father, they had a great many housekeepers who worked in the household and looked after the children. Due to so many changes and different caretakers, Jackie feels that she was not able to make a very strong attachment to any one caregiver.

While Jackie and Ryan were living with their father, they got along quite well. Their dad would spend a great deal of time with them, taking them on vacations and doing various activities with them. At that time, Jackie played a protective role with her brother. Whenever he got into trouble with their father, she would jump in between them to keep their dad from hurting Ryan.

> *...Dad used to take Ryan and I with him a lot. We'd go on holidays... and we'd go down to the States... and he'd take us on picnics and what not... We [Ryan and I]... got along fairly good then because those were the times that I remember jumping in front of Dad and saying, "Don't you hurt my brother."*

When Jackie was 8, their father passed away. While he was in the hospital, a neighbor, by the name of Rhonda, looked after Jackie and Ryan. Jackie describes

Rhonda as being a very cold, cruel woman. After their father's death, Jackie and Ryan went to live with Rhonda and her husband Patrick.

> *...Dad was in the hospital. He knew he had a heart condition. He wasn't looking after himself. A friend managed to get Ryan into the hospital to see Dad because in those days, kids didn't go to hospitals. So, he went up to the hospital and did get to see Dad before he died. But I didn't get a chance to see him. Rhonda was looking after us at that time... when Dad was in the hospital... She told Ryan and I, "I want to see you two kids downstairs." So we went downstairs with her and she looked at us and she said, "You don't have a dad anymore." ...That was it. She never... put her arms around us. She never offered any... sort of consolation. I don't know where Ryan went. I went next door to my girlfriend's house and sought comfort there... It was after Dad died that Rhonda and Patrick started looking after us...*

Jackie and Ryan were left alone in the house very frequently. Rhonda would spend the day shopping while Patrick was at work, and the two of them would spend the rest of the afternoon and evening at the bar, drinking.

> *When her husband went back to work in the afternoon, she would be dressed and would go... downtown and spend the afternoon shopping, I suppose. Then she'd meet him at the bar and they'd stay at the bar until it closed at seven o'clock and then they'd come home. Then again at nine o'clock they'd go back to the bar until it closed at midnight. This was an everyday sort of thing. So we spent a lot of time by ourselves.*

The only time of the day that Jackie saw Rhonda and Patrick was at noon, when they would all come home from work or school for lunch. However, Rhonda and Patrick would go into the living room to eat, while Jackie and Ryan were left in the kitchen. There was a large mirror in the living room, and Rhonda would monitor what was going on in the kitchen by watching the children's reflection in it. Ryan would do things to torment Jackie, but she could not react or complain, as she knew that Rhonda was constantly watching their reflection in the mirror.

> *...she'd make a big meal at lunchtime... We got home from school and then they would go sit in the living room and watch our reflection through the mirror. So*

> *my brother and I would eat our lunch by ourselves in the kitchen... We used to have pasteurized milk at that time and Ryan used to be the one to pour the milk and if it was a new bottle of milk he'd just pour the top part into my glass so that I had all the cream in my glass and... do spiteful things like that, which... cream is just... yuck. It was awful and I couldn't do a thing about it because they were looking at us and could see everything.*

After Rhonda and Patrick were finished eating, they would leave the children alone to clean up the kitchen. Jackie was left responsible to do the dishes, and Ryan would continue to torment her while she tried to finish the dishes before going back to school.

> *They'd be gone when it was time to do the dishes and... Ryan used to tease me like crazy. He'd have the towel and he'd flick the towel at me and just generally give me a rough time and prevent me from getting the dishes done and I had to do the dishes and get it all cleaned up and walk back to school before the bell rang. So it used to be quite a rigamarole...*

This was also the time that Ryan began to physically maltreat Jackie. It would occur while they were alone in the house, without any parental figure to observe what was going on.

> *...I think the conflict really started... after Dad died... when we were by ourselves... particularly in the evenings after school. We were left alone so much of the time... He'd be downstairs. He belonged to Sea Cadets, so he'd be polishing his boots or doing something down there, and for whatever the reason, whether it was for company or what... I was down there. That's when he used to become physically abusive and punch my shoulders, get really angry at me, and throw me down on the cement and hit my head against the cement. He was angry. Really angry. Mean angry. I spent a lot of time with him. We had no TV. So what else did you do? If there was just the two of you's in the house... I must have spent a lot of time downstairs and maybe that bugged him... Whatever it was that set it off... there was a lot of beatings.*

These beatings occurred on a regular basis. Even though Jackie knew that she would be physically hurt if she went downstairs to spend time with Ryan, she continued to go down there to see him. She is not really sure why she did this, except perhaps out of boredom and loneliness.

> *...it would happen two, three times a week. The need for companionship must have drawn me back down the next time. A sense of loneliness would have drawn me back over and over.*

Jackie did not tell Rhonda and Patrick what was going on, as she did not feel close enough to them to tell them what she was going through. This was further complicated by the fact that Rhonda constantly compared Jackie and Ryan, which fostered a sense of competition between the two children. Furthermore, Jackie was also still somewhat protective of Ryan, and did not want him to get into trouble.

> *...with Rhonda and Patrick, you never talked back to them. What they said was... the rule. In those days, you were seen and not heard. You never spoke back... I didn't have the freedom to be able to go to her and say, "This is what's happening," because I think I was on one hand protective of him... I think in many ways there was a competition between Ryan and I to gain approval and one of the ways of doing that was... if I were to wash and wax and polish the kitchen floor.. then... I was the good girl and she would say to Ryan, "Why can't you be like your sister?" If Ryan did it, then she'd come at me [and say], "Why can't you be like your brother?" There was this constant comparing... and as a result, I never told on Ryan. I never... If my eye was kind of black from him flicking the towel at me... I'd say that I ran into a door. Beatings on the shoulders weren't visible. There wasn't a tremendous amount of bruising. He didn't really hit me in the face. But I never, ever [told]...*

At the same time as Jackie was being maltreated by Ryan, Rhonda began to physically abuse her as well. This made her even more reluctant to tell anybody what was going on with Ryan.

> *I just didn't have the freedom to go and talk to her [Rhonda] because she herself was a very abusive woman. She used to have the belt hanging on the door in the kitchen. I don't know what I would do to instigate the use of the belt. I really and truly don't know because I know I was too afraid to ever talk back. But she used to really whale on me... I used to go to my girlfriend's house next door and we'd show her mom the welts on my legs and my back and in those*

> *days there was absolutely nothing that could be done. Absolutely nothing. So it was coming from both ends. It was coming from Ryan and it was coming from her.*

One of the only things Jackie can remember that she and Ryan used to do together was to get together every night and dispose of some food so that it would look like they had made dinner.

> *...when we came home from school at nighttime... she was in the bar so she wouldn't make meals for us. That was the one thing that Ryan and I did together. Neither one of us wanted to make a meal and we didn't want to eat, so we'd throw x number slices of bread down the toilet and x number of eggs and some milk and get rid of it. That was the thing we did together.*

When Jackie thinks back to her childhood, she is astonished and disturbed by the fact that Patrick did not do anything to stop the abuse that was going on in the household.

> *He [Patrick] never, ever interfered or said, "Enough of what you're doing." For years I thought, "Poor Patrick. He was so kind. Such a kind man." I remember sitting on his knee and singing songs... with him. It wasn't that long ago that it suddenly dawned on me that he never protected us at all. He didn't protect me. I was a little girl and he sat back and let his wife... do the things she did and never, ever said a word or intervened... It really changed my opinion of him when I realized that. I thought, "How could you sit back and let somebody do that?"*

Jackie found the same to be true of some of the members of her extended family. Every summer, she and Ryan would go to visit various family members on a farm. She remembers that she told them what was going on, and yet, nobody ever stopped her from going back to that house at the end of the summer.

> *In the summertime, Ryan and I used to go to my mother's side of the family... for two months. He would go and stay with my grandma and I would stay with an aunt and uncle. [Rhonda] would come down to pick us up [at the end of the summer]. I remember one year, sitting out on the porch. Auntie Betty had this*

> *dog and the dog was soakin' wet from my tears because I didn't want to go back to [Rhonda's house]. I didn't want to go back. I cried and cried and cried and cried... My aunt and uncle... they let me go back... for each of those years. Why did they let us go back?*

Although the relationship between Jackie and Ryan was extremely dysfunctional, Jackie felt as though the only person that she had was her brother. Despite his maltreatment of her, she looked up to him and desperately wanted a close relationship to him.

> *...they used to tell me that I had Ryan on a... pedestal. That I really, really looked up to him. I'm sure I did. He was all I had. The only thing I had was him. He was important to me. I really did look up to him. There was no one else. This is the thing. There was no one else. I had my girlfriend... I'm not sure I would have made it through anything without her. But she didn't live in the same house and she had her own family and her own problems. Ryan was important to me. I guess because blood is thicker than water. Simply because there's only him and I. I guess it wouldn't be that important if there was one parent or the other parent. But simply because there's just him and I.*

Ryan did not emotionally maltreat Jackie in the way of yelling, belittling, or name calling. However, she felt neglected by him because he did not fulfill any of her emotional needs. This contributed even further to Jackie's feelings of deprivation and neglect. She believes that this may have led to a vicious circle, where she would be badgering him to give her some attention and love, and he would become frustrated and lash out physically. Then she would badger him even more, and he would lash out even more fiercely.

> *...he's always been really, really important to me... but he's never been able to give me what I've needed. Never. For years, I really wanted him to be what I needed from a brother and there was just no way. He's never been able to say, "I'll protect you," or "It's going to be okay," or "I'm here for you," and that's what I think I've been looking for from him. Which is what precipitated my bugging him, and then that would lead up to the responses that I got...*

Whenever Jackie was maltreated by Ryan, she would react by running away, as she was not big enough to fight back. She felt very strong emotional reactions to his treatment of her, which resulted in a determination to not let herself feel these negative emotions in adulthood.

> *I was very, very tiny. I was a very small child. I would try to run away... but not... hit back because... there just wouldn't have been any way for me to hit back. Run, yeah... [When he would hit me, I felt] terrified and really helpless. Really, really helpless. I used to vow that when I became an adult I would never, ever again fear anyone... and that was something that was really, really important to me... I had so much fear in me and helplessness and I built up walls... [I learned coping skills] very young. I think it was all a... coping mechanism of not allowing yourself to feel. If you don't feel anything, then you can't be hurt. If you don't expect anything from anyone, then you're not going to be disappointed.*

After approximately four years, Rhonda and Patrick decided that they no longer wanted to take care of Jackie and Ryan.

> *...[it] would have been from grade three to maybe grade six that this woman [Rhonda] had us and that most of this [maltreatment from Ryan] went on. Then she decided... for whatever reason... that they didn't want to look after us anymore. So we were supposed to... live with my dad's brother and his family, but we didn't know them. We'd gone for years down to my mom's side of the family. Down to the farm every [summer]. So I remember Ryan and I together, sitting on the floor, each of us writing a letter. Him to grandma and the two uncles that lived with her, and me to this aunt and uncle of mine and begging them to take us. That again was something that we did together. As it ended up, that's exactly what happened. We did go down to the [farm] and at that time we were living in different homes.*

Once Jackie had moved in with her aunt and uncle, she did not see Ryan very much. For some reason, her aunt and uncle wanted to keep them apart and did all they could to keep Ryan away from Jackie. Even though he had treated her so poorly, Jackie was upset by this. She wanted to see her brother.

> *...this aunt and uncle... they were doing everything to try and alienate us... I don't know if they didn't like Ryan. I don't know what it was. For some reason or other he just really, really bothered this aunt and uncle of mine. It was like he was no good... and he wasn't a bad boy. Ed [my uncle] chased him right off the place. So here, again, we have adults that are... trying to push two kids apart. The only two left in the family. Instead of trying to nurture a relationship between the two of them... they're keeping us apart? I knew we had to live in different places, but [I] certainly [wanted] to spend time with him.*

As Ryan grew older, he became more supportive of Jackie. He even let her stay at his house once when she got into trouble with her aunt and uncle.

> *...[in] grade eleven, maybe twelve... when I was still living at Ed and Betty's [house]... I came home late from a date or something. All my things were out in the yard. I was absolutely devastated. The fellow I was out with took me to his house. I was friends with his sister as well, so I stayed there overnight. The only place I could think to go was to phone my brother and I stayed for a while with him. He didn't know what to do with me. He had a place, and I had... a roof over my head, but I was still in school... It was him that contacted Ed and Betty and they gave all sorts of conditions for me to come back. Having nowhere else to go, [I] went with the conditions and went back. That was the first time that they ever really acknowledged him or let him back in the place was when he took me back [to their house]...*

As Jackie and Ryan grew into adulthood, they became closer and started to spend more time together. They have continued to attend each other's special family events, such as weddings and birthdays. They also visit each other occasionally.

> *...the year he got married... I... was a bridesmaid for the wedding. When... I got married, Ryan was one of the groomsmen... I think that since we've been married we've visited. Not all the time, but we do visit. As families we spent time together. We spent Christmases together... we went there one year and they came here more than that to spend Christmas. Ryan had his 50th birthday. Dad died at 49, so... in my mind, [it was] very important that I go to that 50th birthday. When the kids get married, we go... and vice versa.*

Despite the time that Jackie and Ryan spend together and the effort they make to visit one another, their relationship still seems to be somewhat superficial. Thus, even in adulthood, Ryan is incapable of meeting Jackie's emotional needs.

> *...we visited back and forth, but never, ever had any deep discussion about feelings. Ryan and I never, ever talked about how we felt or about the loss [of our father] or... anything. [We were] never really close and never really talked about anything... There's just never been an opportunity... to go beyond the surface...*

A few years ago, another rift formed between Jackie and Ryan, due to arguments they had regarding money they inherited from an uncle.

> *...we had a disagreement. An uncle had died and left no will. As a result of that, I guess by law, every family member gets an equal share... Ryan and I split my mother's share... But... one of the uncles wanted more or something, and I said no. What's mine is mine and that's it. Ryan was all prepared to give to this uncle and I said, "Fine. If you want to do that, that's fine. I'm not going to." I owed this uncle nothing. As it happens, this aunt and I were the only two that said, "No. We want our share." So we were really blacklisted. For a number of years Ryan and I never talked. Never a phone call or anything. He was mad at me that I had not gone along with what the family had wanted to do. That was it.*

Several years later, Ryan's daughter was getting married and invited Jackie and her family to the wedding. Jackie decided that she wanted to go. While she was there, she made amends with her brother. However, the incident with the money was not discussed and was never fully put to rest. Some time later, Jackie did have a conversation about it with Ryan's wife and found out that several lies had been told about her to Ryan. The fact that he believed these lies without discussing them with her hurt Jackie deeply.

> *...his oldest daughter sent us a wedding invitation and... that's my niece and irregardless of what the relationship is between Ryan and I... I was not going to not go to that wedding. It didn't ask for an RSVP on the card, so I never told him that we would be coming. When we were going along the receiving line*

> *afterwards, both the girls were just so glad that we had come... Then when we got around to Ryan and [his wife]... [they had their] arms wide open and [they said], "You're staying. You're not going home." So... the fence was mended but never discussed. Which is kind of the story about everything. Never, never feelings discussed. The last time we went to visit... we... talked about this rift over this money... [His wife] told me what they had been told. It was all a bunch of lies to the effect that we wanted more than our share and that we had... held things up and done all these terrible, terrible things and he believed them all. We were able to make amends and visit back and forth never having talked about it... but he still believed all these things about me...*

There have been times when Jackie has gone to visit Ryan and has had an opportunity to see how he is treated by other people. She feels as though he is constantly trying to gain the approval of others, and she finds it sad to watch the way that other people take advantage of him. Unfortunately, Ryan has also become an alcoholic and copes with his difficulties by drinking. This has made it even more difficult for Jackie to create a closer relationship to him.

> *...we would go and visit... and then I'd see... the kind of life that he was living, and... I used to just hurt for him and the way his friends used to treat him. He always seemed to be really wanting approval... Some of the things that his friends would say to him and he'd allow them... to say... It was just heart wrenching. He drank a lot. Really drank a lot. I would tell him how much I loved him and I really did feel... a sense of love. I could hurt for him when I saw what people were doing to him. [But] Ryan's just not the type of person that gets [emotional]... He's a very surface person. In the same sense that he uses alcohol as his method of coping. [He thinks] it's better to be blind to things than look them in the eye.*

When Jackie thinks back over her relationship with Ryan and the maltreatment she received from him, she can see that their relationship has had a lot of effect on her life in the present. Although some of these learnings were positive, such as becoming more independent, there have also been a great deal of negative ramifications, such as having low self esteem, closing herself off emotionally, living her life to prove to others that she is a worthy person, and doubting that anyone could ever truly love her.

> *...there was a lot of repercussions. What you learn is, you learn to be... very, very independent. I never, ever felt that... I could depend on anyone. I always thought that whatever happened to me was going to happen because of me. That that was my responsibility. Just go day by day and let everything happen... and don't really have a lot of high expectations... It's as though you just tune out and don't have any feelings. I've always been... very, very serious. Life was serious to me. Really, really serious. It's not a joke... You've got to work for everything you get... You have to take responsibility... I put a tremendous amount of pressure on myself along those lines...*
>
> *[And I had] no self esteem. None. None whatsoever. [I was] just a scared little rabbit. I was a really, really hard worker. Always did my best and always tried to please everybody... like I was proving... the rationale behind my existence... and prove to them that I belong. It's all been for other people.*
>
> *...ultimately what happens is... you're unable to... love yourself and it's very, very difficult to accept that anyone could love you. When I had the kids that was the first time in my life that I could really and truly give love freely and also accept their love back... Even with [my husband]... it's very difficult to accept the fact that he could love me. Then the kids... go through their rebellious years and that was really, really destructive because I thought they didn't love me anymore. I thought I'd lost that.*

For Jackie, there is no doubt that her brother physically abused her. She also believes that he emotionally abused her through neglect and a lack of care.

> *[He was] physically [abusive]. Definitely... [And he was] emotionally [abusive as well] because I had certain needs and he was incapable of meeting them.*

Over the years Jackie has reflected on the possible reasons that this abuse occurred. She has come to the conclusion that the main reason that Ryan was so angry and hurtful towards her is the fact that he blames her for the death of their mother.

> *...I think Ryan's responses to me... very much... emphasized to me that I was to blame for him losing his mom... and I think I've taken that responsibility on. Intellectually, you know better. But in your heart... it's like two different things. I think... I've felt I've... owed it to him somehow... to make up for that. But I*

> *know I can't. There's no way you can make up for that. Yet... I'm responsible and that makes me sad for [him as a] little boy... really sad... I've cried many a tear when I sit down and picture that little boy...*

In fact, Jackie feels such a tremendous amount of guilt over the death of her mother that if given the chance to change the past in any way, she would make it so that she died during her birth and that her mother had lived.

> *[If I could change anything about the past] I would have to go right back to the beginning... and... I would... I would let Mom live... and let me not... because... I firmly believe that... my dad... gave up and preferred to die and be with Mom to staying and caring for us kids. So the whole... scenario would have been very, very different for everyone concerned...*

At this point in time, Jackie is maintaining a relationship with her brother. They still visit occasionally and make sure to attend family events. She has even made an attempt to discuss their relationship and the maltreatment that she received from him.

> *The last time we went to visit them, we were talking, and... that was the first time that we talked about the beatings that he used to give me... He totally denied ever doing it. He said, "No. No. No, I never did that." He'd been drinking, so I'm not sure how much got through... and he was drunk, so you can't really talk about it. [But] he just completely denied it.*

Surprisingly, Ryan's lack of acknowledgment of the way that he treated Jackie in childhood did not have a large impact on her. She remains determined to stay in contact with him and have a relationship with him. As for the future, she may try to talk to him about the situation some more, as she has several questions that have been left unanswered.

> *...I need to know if all my assumptions... are true. Did he really feel like [I] took [his] mother and brought the little baby [instead]?*

Although she is resigned to the fact that Ryan is not the type of person to have a deep conversation, perhaps one day, she will ask him these questions. And until then, Jackie and Ryan will go on as they have been...

The Meta-Story

Thematic analysis and presentation of exemplars.

Although the four stories of sibling maltreatment that have been presented provide an in-depth description of each individual's experiences, it is also important to compare and contrast these stories in order to arrive at an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. There are several themes which are shared by the participants. By examining these common themes, a meta-story of the experience of sibling maltreatment emerges, which is important in helping others to understand the feelings, beliefs, and experiences of victims of sibling maltreatment. While analyzing the narratives for common themes, I also identified exemplars, which are defined by Leonard (1989) as specific events or incidents that signify the meaning of a phenomenon for those who have experienced it. Exemplars are "stories or vignettes that capture the meaning of a situation in such a way that the meaning can then be recognized in another situation that might have very different objective characteristics" (p. 54). When appropriate, I have provided exemplars in order to help the reader gain an understanding of the meaning of the experience of sibling maltreatment for the participants in this study.

Definition of maltreatment as "abuse." One of the most salient themes that emerged during analysis of the narratives is the fact that each of the participants defined the maltreatment they had experienced as "abuse." Although there were a variety of different types of maltreatment, including verbal, physical, and emotional, all participants had come to the conclusion that the treatment they received from their sibling was excessive.

Bob: *...the general definition of abuse... would be... something that someone does or says to make another person feel... disrespected or unwanted or... basically taken advantage of. [What she did was abuse]... more on the verbal end of things.*

Amy: *I think kids, obviously they're going to have sibling rivalry and conflicts... but I think the punching and stuff that he did was more... abuse that what I would think would be normal. I... figured if it hurt, that was too much. Being cruel, that was too much.*

Jackie: *[He was] physically [abusive]. Definitely... [And he was] emotionally [abusive as well] because I had certain needs and he was incapable of meeting them.*

In an earlier chapter, I provided a definition of "abuse" which was derived from the previous literature in the areas of sibling and family violence. I wrote that for the purposes of this study, "physical abuse" would be defined as sibling interactions which are prolonged, are accompanied by intense affect, and involve coercion that is based on a recognized power differential (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Wiehe (1990) defines physical abuse as willful acts which are used as a means to gain power or control and have a high probability of causing physical harm to the victim. In order to differentiate "abusive" behavior from "normal" behavior, one must take into account the constancy and intensity of the behavior, as physical abuse will occur at a high level, with a great deal of emotionality on the part of the victim (Whipple & Finton, 1995). Wiehe adds that one must also take into account the age appropriateness of the behavior, the intent of the perpetrator, and the reactions of the perpetrator to the harm he/she is causing the victim. In the case of "emotional abuse", I wrote that "emotional abuse" is defined as treatment which results in feelings of degradation, humiliation, or belittlement (Cicirelli, 1995; Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1990).

After examining the narratives in this study, I would add feelings of helplessness to the above definitions of abuse. In each of the cases in this study, there was a profound feeling of being lost in a situation from which there was no escape. None of the participants were able to find help or an appropriate means to stop the maltreatment they received from their sibling. As previously described in an earlier chapter, feelings of helplessness are often an important component of an abusive situation (Bennet, 1990; Gelles, et al., 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Walker, 1979). This would especially be the case for young children, who often have no choice but to live with their family (Bennet, 1990). If they are caught in an environment in which they are being maltreated by a sibling, then I believe it is likely that they will develop these feelings of helplessness, as observed in the four participants in this study.

According to the definitions outlined for use in the current study, I believe that all of the participants were abused by their siblings. In the case of Margaret and Jackie, their siblings would be considered to be extremely physically abusive, as they consistently caused physical injury to these participants. They were also emotionally abusive, as Margaret was belittled by her sister through teasing and name calling and Jackie existed in a relationship which led her to feel degraded, unloved, and unwanted through the emotional neglect of her brother. In the case of Amy, her brother was extremely cruel to her and her younger brother, committing both physical and emotional acts which seemed to be carried out for the purpose of creating feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, and fear in his siblings.

In the case of Bob, at first glance it appears that his sister's behavior falls into the realm of "normal" sibling conflict. She did not have the physical size or strength to hurt him physically, and many of her verbal behaviors could be seen as minor attempts to insult her older brother. However, I believe that it is extremely important to take the participant's viewpoint into account. According to Bob, the way he was treated was not only frustrating and annoying, but made him feel unwanted, unloved, and disrespected. In his own words, Bob provided a similar definition of abuse that I have presented, and he described several occasions where he felt degraded and humiliated by his sister. Through her verbal behavior, Betty managed to create a power differential between her and Bob, with him feeling constantly and consistently like the victim in their relationship.

As previously outlined, one of the difficulties in identifying dysfunctional sibling relationships is the fact that many people minimize the detrimental effect sibling maltreatment may have on the victim (Cicerelli, 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1990). To say that the treatment Bob received from his sister was "minor" or "insignificant" would be discounting the intense feelings of hurt and rejection that Bob experienced in childhood and carries with him in the present.

It is important to take the information provided by these participants and relate their experiences to those that clients may experience in a counselling situation. In this case, it is important to recognize that the impact on the victim is integral in defining a relationship as abusive. When counselling individuals, it is ethical and respectful to listen to the client's point of view and deal with their issues according to their perceptions of the events that have occurred in their lives, rather than pass judgement on these events. This will require that the counsellor suspend many long held beliefs about sibling conflict, such as that such conflict is normal and inevitable. Thus, when working with clients who may have been abused by a sibling, it is important to gain an understanding of their feelings about these experiences, and help them to work through the variety of negative emotions that can occur as a result of sibling maltreatment.

The one-sided aspect of the maltreatment and the futility of efforts to defend oneself. The participants in this study described the abuse they received from their siblings as being entirely one-sided, with the exception of occasionally trying to fight or argue back. This is related to the definition of abuse, as some authors have differentiated between normal and dysfunctional interactions by stating that "normal" conflict involves mutual opposition and disagreement, whereas maltreatment is usually unidirectional (Cicirelli, 1995; Katz et al., 1992). As described by the participants, the one-sidedness of the situation was completely unfair and endlessly frustrating.

Amy: *... I can't remember a time when I ever started a fight with him or ever said anything to purposely hurt him or put him down or anything... I was totally at the receiving end...*

This one-sided aspect of the maltreatment may have contributed to the feelings of helplessness described above, as well as feelings of inferiority and powerlessness. As the perpetrators obtained more control and power over the participants, the maltreatment may have continued or possibly escalated, in order for the perpetrator to experience these feelings of control and power over and over again. Thus, the cycle of abusive behavior would continue, with the perpetrator continually winning each battle, and the victim feeling consistently more and more persecuted and wounded. Eventually, the participants would be resigned to living in an abusive environment and would no longer make an attempt to stand up for him/herself. This could have a long lasting impact on the self-esteem of the participants, who stated that they felt a variety of negative emotions, such as worthlessness, isolation, and fear, at the hands of their siblings. As stated in a previous section, research findings from earlier studies have indicated that problems in adulthood, such as depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol problems, and a negative view of the self, can often occur from being the victim of this type of physical or emotional abuse (Herzberger, 1996; Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1990).

This point is very important in differentiating normal sibling conflict from that which is dysfunctional. In a "normal" sibling relationship, interactions would be mutual, so that neither one of the siblings would be consistently victimized. It is notable to make this point, as parents can help to prevent sibling abuse by observing their children in order to ensure that one child is not consistently victimizing the other. If parents were to witness an abusive situation between their children, then it is important that they intervene and stop this abusive behavior from continuing. Thus, it is necessary that we educate parents and teach them the signs of an abusive relationship, as well as to teach them techniques and strategies for helping their children learn how to interact appropriately with one another.

Avoidance as a method of coping. Since fighting or arguing back did not help the abusive situation for any of the participants, they all reported that the best way they found to cope with the situation was to avoid their brother or sister as much as possible. They each did this in different ways: Amy by seeking solace in her bedroom, Margaret by going to her aunts and uncles for comfort, Bob by not responding to his sister, and Jackie by running away from her brother. As described by Amy, there were times when her frustration became so overwhelming she would fight back with her brother, despite the fact that he was bigger and could seriously hurt her. However, the majority of the time, she avoided him as much as possible and lived for the moment that she could move out of the house.

Amy: *...the only safe place was my room. Our rooms were like our own little zone. It was... understood that you don't go into the other person's room... I spent a lot of my childhood in my bedroom... just try[ing] to avoid him as much as possible... I remember several occasions where I just had enough and decided, "Well, I'm just going to hit him back." It just got to where I was going to go all out and just give it everything. If I was going to get beat up, I was going to get beat up... I would [hit him] and he would hit me back harder and I'd hit him back harder and, eventually, he would win because he could hit me harder... I kept planning ahead. Just [thinking], "Okay, I'm going to college. So as soon as I know what college, I can start planning to move out of here and be free."*

Once again, this theme helps to exemplify the powerlessness and helplessness that the participants were experiencing. Since they could not obtain help from their parents or other family members, and their own efforts to fight back did not stop the maltreatment, the only way they could cope with their experiences was to avoid the source of the problem: their sibling. This theme also illustrates the high level of resiliency of the participants and the ingenuity they had as children to find ways to cope with their problems. As shown in this study, some coping mechanisms were as basic as running away, while other were as sophisticated as developing an entirely new social support network to rely on in times of need.

From a counselling perspective, this is extremely important, as it is often helpful for the client to be acknowledged for the coping mechanisms they have used and the strengths they have displayed in dealing with their issues. By recognizing the effort that was made by the child in the abusive situation, the counsellor can provide support and encouragement to the client, which will help him/her to build self-esteem and a belief in his/her own strength. Ideally, these clients will come to the conclusion that they did the best they could and that they have the capability to deal with their problems.

The development of independence. Due to these methods of coping with the maltreatment they were receiving, all of the participants developed a strong sense of independence. Although a part of this trait may have been a part of their personalities, some of the participants commented on the fact that they became independent as a result of the abuse. For example, Margaret developed her independence in order to prove herself to others and Jackie became more independent in order to avoid the risk of being hurt again.

Jackie: *What you learn is, you learn to be... very, very independent. I never, ever felt that... I could depend on anyone. I always thought that whatever happened to me was going to happen because of me. That was my responsibility. I think it was all a... coping mechanism of not allowing yourself to feel. If you don't feel anything, then you can't be hurt. If you don't expect anything from anyone, then you're not going to be disappointed.*

This theme is also related to the resiliency of the participants, which was discussed above. Many of the participants concluded that they could not rely on anyone else for help or support and that they had to learn how to take care of themselves. This is another strength that can be emphasized in counselling, in order to help clients come to the realization that they have the courage and competence to deal with their own issues.

The theme of independence is also important in that it illustrates the fact that positive developments can arise out of adversity. In talking with the participants, it seems that they all value their independence very highly. Thus, they seem to recognize that becoming self-reliant is a tremendous accomplishment, especially when one considers the abusive environments in which they were raised. For some of the participants, the personal growth that occurred as a result of the abuse makes their past experiences more valuable and gives them meaning. According to Margaret, if given the opportunity to change the past, she would not change the maltreatment she received from her sister, as she believes it has had many positive effects on her life.

> *Margaret:* *...would I change anything? I don't know... I think it's one of the things that have made me stronger. So I don't know if I would change anything...*

This point is another one which is important to make in counselling. If a counsellor can help his/her clients to discover the personal growth that can occur through misfortune, it may help them to arrive at a resolution about the past. Clients may come to see that although the past was painful and destructive, they have also been able to grow and develop in many positive ways, which may not have occurred had they not been maltreated as they were. This can be useful in helping clients to deal with feelings of anger and resentment they may have toward their sibling, as they may be able to come to the realization that they were able to take some positive lessons out of the anguish and pain they experienced as children. Thus, seeing the positives that came out of the abuse can lead to healing and resolution.

Parents were unavailable to help with the abusive situation. Another theme which was common between the participants was that their parents were unavailable to help them with the problems they were experiencing with their brother or sister. The reasons for this varied between participants. For example, for both Margaret and

Jackie, their caregivers were abusive themselves, which made it extremely difficult to ask for help. This was also complicated by the fact that, for Jackie, her caregivers left her and her brother alone for most of the day. For Bob, his parents minimized the maltreatment he received from his sister and treated it as though it was not serious. In Amy's case, her parents were also not available, as her father was mentally abusive to the children and her mother was usually at work when the abuse from her brother occurred. Furthermore, Amy believed that her mother could not do anything to stop her brother even if she did know about the abuse. It seems that each of the participants had a belief that there was nothing that could be done about their sibling's behavior, which contributed to their feelings of helplessness.

Jackie: *...the conflict really started... when we were by ourselves... particularly in the evenings after school. We were left alone so much of the time. I never, ever [told]... I didn't have the freedom to be able to go to her and say, "This is what's happening" ...because she herself was a very abusive woman.*

Bob: *Occasionally mom did side with me, but more often than not she sided with my sister. She'd go to my sister's side immediately and take her side because I was bigger and what-not... She was jaded that way. I tried [to talk to my parents about it]... but they were just like, "Oh, go play. Forget about it. Move on. This is not serious."*

Margaret: *My sister had total control over the household when my mom and dad were working... She's my mom's favourite so I was always like the black sheep. [Even if I told on my sister] I knew... my mom would have taken her side anyway... There was a lot of physical abuse going on in that family. It wasn't just my sister. It was my parents as well.*

Amy: *...my dad never knew as far as I know. My mom, I just remember that she was at work a lot and so, for the most part of the day there was just no adult around. I never told on him or anything like that. I just don't think that she could have done anything about it if she had known and at the time I knew I had to get by. "This is the way he is. He's out of control. Mom can't help."*

As previously stated, minimization or tolerance of sibling maltreatment is one of the most widespread difficulties in the recognition of this phenomenon as a problem (Brody et al., 1992; Felson, 1983; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Newman, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987; Straus et al., 1980). It is extremely important that parents be educated about the seriousness of this type of abuse and that they learn appropriate parenting strategies so that they can intervene on the victimized child's behalf. For many children in abusive sibling relationships, the only place to get help would be from their parents. If the parents do not respond appropriately, it can be very destructive, as the parents are the child's main source of support and safety (Bennett, 1990). As described by Wiehe (1990), in this scenario the child is being degraded and humiliated by a sibling, while the parents, who are the only source of help available, ignore the abuse. Thus, if parents ignore or minimize the maltreatment a child is receiving, it is possible that the child may have serious developmental difficulties, such as depression, low self-esteem, and the development of learned helplessness (Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Herzberger, 1996; Wiehe, 1990).

When counselling a family in which there is a high level of sibling conflict or sibling maltreatment occurring, the counsellor must address the beliefs and values of the parents in order to discover their perspective on their children's behavior. The counsellor must also make an effort to educate the parents on appropriate sibling behavior and work with the family as a whole to stop the sibling abuse from occurring. The erroneous belief that the children can "work it out between themselves" needs to be dispelled and the parents encouraged to intervene on any destructive behaviors that one child may be using to victimize another child.

A related issue is the fact that the abuse will often occur when the children are left alone, so that the parents may not even be aware that the abuse is occurring. Thus, it is important that parents provide adequate supervision for their children, as well as being open to listening and believing what their children tell them (Wiehe, 1990). In order to keep children from relying on abusive means to resolve disputes, parents need to refrain from using corporal punishment, teach their children appropriate methods for dealing with conflict, model appropriate behaviors, build awareness of abuse in their children, and reward positive sibling interactions (Dunn, 1984; Wiehe, 1990).

As many parents are not aware that sibling abuse is an issue, it is extremely important that information be disseminated to parents, whether it be through parenting classes, schools, parenting magazines, or hospitals. This information should include how to prevent abusive behavior between siblings, how to recognize such abuse if it is occurring, what to do if children are being abusive to one another, and where to go for help if parents are not able to stop the abuse from occurring.

Maintenance of the sibling relationship into adulthood. As the participants grew into adulthood, they managed to maintain relationships with their siblings. They all described a variety of positive aspects of their sibling relationships, which included getting support in times of need and doing various activities together. All of the participants had several positive comments to make regarding their siblings.

Bob: *There are certain things we can do together one on one... have fun... and that's good 'cause we'll have a good time. She generally has a good heart and tries to do things for other people that are nice. I think that her friends really enjoy her. She can be a lot of fun to be around. She has the capability of being a really nice person...*

Margaret: *We did do fun things. Sisterly things. She was really very giving. She'd give you the shirt off her back. She did have a good heart despite all her problems. She would plan things for people. She would [say], "Oh, let's have this birthday party for this person..." She was fun. She was a real hoot... her sense of humor was out of this world. We could do a lot of neat stuff together. Like we would go shopping... I would sew, and we would go and look at patterns... we would have dinners at my house and at her house... It was really fun.*

Amy: *The one time that I was just amazed that it was him on the other end of the phone saying these things was when I got divorced... my brother actually called*

> *me and... it was like a different person. He was trying to help. He was saying nice things. Trying to make me feel better. Try[ing] to help me get through it...*

It is surprising that all of the siblings expressed a desire to be close to their brother or sister, despite the fact that they had been maltreated throughout childhood and adolescence. It is especially striking since the relationship in adulthood is one of choice, which was not the case while the participants were growing up. This theme demonstrates the strong ties that one often has with a sibling and the significance that is often attributed to the sibling relationship. It is also related to the fact that the participants are able to find positive aspects to a negative situation. Despite the fact that their sibling treated them so poorly, they are able to find positive characteristics to their sibling and their relationship. This may help them to come to a resolution about the past, as they seem to be trying to put the past behind them and create a more positive relationship in the present.

Superficial adult relationships with their siblings. Despite these positive sibling characteristics and experiences, all of the participants described their adult sibling relationships as being somewhat superficial and meaningless. Even in adulthood, their siblings were finding ways to continue to hurt them. With some, it was a matter of not being emotionally available or open with their feelings. With others, it was continuing to engage in hurtful, belittling behaviors.

Amy: *...we don't really talk much or see each other much... We never talk about anything meaningful, but we kind of chat about this or that and... now, as adults, we're polite to each other and nice to each other and things are fine... It has always been a really sketchy kind of relationship where we don't talk much, we don't see each other much... I just think his personality is so deeply affected by... his childhood, that it's just so hard for him to show kindness or love...*

Jackie: *...we visited back and forth, but never, ever had any deep discussion about feelings... [We] never ever talked about how we felt... [We were] never really close and never really talked about anything... I guess there's just never been an opportunity... to go beyond the surface.*

Bob: *I never really can fully trust her because I don't know when she's gonna stab me in the back with something.*

It is unfortunate that the negative experiences from childhood are continuing into adulthood for these participants. However, it is not surprising when one examines the previous literature on abuse. Several authors have written about the fact that hostile acts can shape future aggressive behavior (Dunn, 1984; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978). As described by Herzberger (1996), a cycle of abuse is perpetuated by the establishment of violent norms. In other words, the perpetrators of abuse often come to accept such abusive behavior as normal and continue to act in an abusive manner throughout their lives.

It would be imperative in a counselling situation to help the client deal with these issues. It would likely be extremely disappointing and discouraging to have an abusive and hurtful sibling relationship carry on into adulthood. Counsellors will need to draw on the client's strengths and coping mechanisms that they have used throughout their lives and help them to find an appropriate method for dealing with their sibling relationship in adulthood. It is important that the counsellor be aware of the intense desire for connection with one's sibling that seems to be operating in these clients. For these four participants, they all seem to be driven towards creating a more healthy relationship with their sibling. In a counselling situation, the loss and grief associated with the fact that this hope has not been realized would need to be addressed.

Attempts to come to terms with the abuse. Another common theme amongst the participants is the fact that they all have made attempts to come to terms with what happened with their sibling while they were growing up. Each participant currently has a plan with the aim of coming to a resolution of these issues. For example, Bob is planning to talk to his sister to let her know how her treatment of him makes him feel. Jackie is waiting for an opportunity to talk with her brother, to ask him if her assumptions about their relationship and his view of her are correct. Margaret, whose sister passed away a few years ago, reached resolution by saying good-bye to her sister and leaving the past behind her.

Bob:	*...I should do now what I should have done way back then, and say, "Stop it." That's what I should have done... back in the teenage years. When I talk to her and let her know, "Hey, look, you hurt me with all this crap that you're saying." Maybe she'll stop and say, "Oh, God, I didn't realize I was doing that." I have to [talk to her]. Both for her sake and for mine...*
Margaret:	*...with that burial I said, "Well, good-bye... Have a safe journey and I hope things are better for you where-ever you're going." I just said good-bye... I'm turning the page. That time of my life is over. I don't want to think about it. When I finally said good-bye to it, I said good-bye to it.*

This theme is related to the theme of a superficial adult sibling relationship described above. Each of these participants is still making attempts to resolve the issues from the past. Since many of these negative interactions are still occurring in the present, the participants have had to alter their coping mechanisms. Many of them thought that when they were old enough to leave the household, the maltreatment would discontinue. However, due to their love and the desire for connection that they feel for their sibling, they are continuing to suffer from the lack of a fulfilling sibling relationship. Consequently, they are still striving to cope with feelings of rejection, resentment, anger, and loss. Their methods of coping have changed from those of avoidance to confronting their sibling and letting them know how they are being affected by the maltreatment. Thus, in adulthood, they have reached a more mature understanding of their relationship and a more effective means of coping with their negative emotions and the relationship with their sibling.

In a counselling situation, it would be important for the counsellor to support the development of these coping skills and encourage these clients to create a plan that will reach their goals regarding their sibling relationship. It would also be important to commend these clients for the tremendous amount of determination and diligence they are displaying in attempting to come to terms with the maltreatment they have received throughout their life and to create a more satisfying relationship with their sibling.

Although it would be ideal for victims of sibling abuse to reconcile with their abusive sibling and create a close relationship, it does not seem likely based on the information provided by the participants in this study. It appears that despite attempts to discuss their relationship or make amends, the siblings continue to reject and hurt the participants.

Amy: *There was one time where I... decided, "Okay, we usually walk into the room. We don't know what to say. We don't look at each other, and we might say hi and look away. I'm going to hug him and see what he does." So I did, and it was just like he was this stiff... it was really weird. I may get the courage to try and hug him again, but it's just such a weird feeling that I usually don't.*

Jackie: *The last time we went to visit them, we were talking, and... that was the first time that we talked about the beatings that he used to give me.... He totally denied ever doing it. He said, "No. No. No. I never did that." ...He just completely denied it.*

The counsellor would have to be cautious in helping the client to develop a realistic plan of how to create a relationship with their sibling that is satisfactory to them, without being disappointed by further rejection and maltreatment by having too high of expectations. This may involve finding other social support to fill the role they were hoping their sibling would fill. Once again, if this occurs, the counsellor will need to address issues of grief and loss associated with abandoning long-held hopes regarding the sibling relationship.

Issues of blame. With regards to issues of blame, participants seem to have differing opinions. Amy and Margaret excuse their siblings' behaviour on the basis that they were going through difficult times and had their own problems to deal with. These participants feel sorry for their brother or sister and do not harbour any resentment or anger towards them.

Amy: *I feel... sorry for him... He was trying to survive. He did the best he could... He didn't know any other way. I always felt like he had it worse than I did because he had all that pressure from my dad... So, I just feel more compassion for him than anger...*

Margaret: *[She] had a lot of problems[illegible] It was a really sad story... her life and... I was the one she took her frustration out on... When you think about it, you can see that she needed to take it out on somebody... When she was 16, 17, she was diagnosed by a psychiatrist as never getting past the mentality of a 16 year old... She wasn't well... and how can you hold that against somebody? If somebody's mentally ill, is that their fault? I don't think you can hold that against somebody. I think I learn[ed] to forgive and put it behind [me] and go on.*

Some of the participants seemed to take responsibility for the maltreatment they received from their sibling, questioning whether they could have acted differently to prevent the altercations that occurred. Jackie blames herself for the death of her mother, who passed away due to complications that arose during Jackie's birth. She feels that the abuse occurred because her brother also blames her for their mother's death. Margaret has also questioned whether she was somehow to blame for the abuse she received from her sister.

Jackie: *...I think [his] responses to me... very much... emphasized to me that I was to blame for him losing his mom... I think I've taken that responsibility on. Intellectually, you know better. But in your heart... it's like two different things... I've felt I've... owed it to him somehow... to make up for that. But I know I can't. There's no way you can make up for that. Yet... I'm responsible. That makes me sad for [him as a] little boy... really sad...*

Margaret: *I don't think I deserved some of the stuff that happened, but at the same time, and I guess this is the victim talking now: "Is it my fault?" 'Cause I know victims think it's always their fault. But, maybe if I wasn't so lippy? If I wasn't so independent? If I had just gone along with her stuff then nothing would have happened?*

The issue of blame is a very interesting one, as it seems as though the majority of the participants in this study do not hold their sibling responsible. This relates back to the role of the parents and the fact that most victims of sibling violence believe that their brother or sister was reacting to a situation and was not inherently an evil or abusive person. This is likely one of the main reasons that the participants are striving to create a closer relationship to their sibling in adulthood, as they do not see their sibling as purposely trying to hurt and abuse them.

Another important point with regards to this theme is the tendency of Jackie and Margaret to blame themselves for the abuse. As stated in an earlier section, Herzberger (1996) and Wiehe (1990) write that one of the most negative effects that can occur as a result of abuse is that the victim internalizes the negative messages he/she is receiving, and accepts them as if they are true, which can bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy, feelings of despair, and a negative view of oneself. In other words, the victim comes to believe that he/she is deserving of the abuse because he or she is "bad" or has done something wrong. It is interesting that in this study, Bob and Amy were able to avoid having this occur, although they also alluded to poor self-esteem, social difficulties, and troubled relationships, which may have been related to the sibling maltreatment they experienced (Whipple & Finton, 1995).

In this study, it appears that for the most part Margaret, Amy, and Bob have been able to come to the realization that they are not to blame for the maltreatment they experienced. However, in Jackie's case, it seems that the feelings of guilt and responsibility are very present and affect her life on a daily basis. In cases such as these, where the victims are not able to see that they were innocent targets for their sibling's aggression, professional help may be necessary to help the victimized siblings to absolve themselves of any blame. When counselling these clients, working on issues of guilt, responsibility, self-esteem, and feelings of worthlessness is extremely important. One of the main goals of coming to terms with the abuse that occurred needs to be helping clients realize that they are not to blame for the maltreatment they received, and that they are worthwhile people who deserve good things in life.

Questioning "why". One of the areas that seems to be of concern to the participants is the question of "why" this happened to them. "Why" were they the ones that their sibling took their frustrations out on? Some of the participants have been extremely confused over their sibling's behaviour and have gone over and over their sibling relationship to try to find the answers. In describing their confusion, the participants express how hurt and betrayed they felt at being maltreated by their brother or sister.

Margaret: *...why me? I was the only one that she hit... and I don't know why it was me.*

Amy: *I just remember thinking, that is so cruel. Why is he doing that? I'm his friend. I'm his sister. I knew I didn't deserve it... but I didn't know why he did it. I was just, "Why is he doing this? This is bizarre. This is really cruel. I don't understand." Now I still think, "Why did he behave that way?"*

The question of "why" they were targeted as being the recipients of abuse seems to be a very serious issue for the participants in this study. Not only did they suffer from the physical and verbal assaults they received from their sibling, but they also had to deal with the betrayal and disloyalty inherent in an abusive relationship. Those who had other brothers and sisters were forced to question "why" they were singled out as the victim. This may have contributed to feelings of guilt, responsibility, and blame. It could also lead to lowered self-esteem, depression, and anxiety, because as children, they would likely attribute the abuse to character flaws in themselves. Although as adults, they have come to the realization that there may not be a concrete reason "why" the abuse occurred, the lowered self-esteem and other ramifications may remain.

These issues need to be addressed in counselling, as well as confronting these "why" questions. The counsellor will have to explore the possibilities with the client and may have to help the client to become comfortable with the fact that there may be no answers to their questions. By helping the client to develop a stronger sense of self and build his/her self-esteem, perhaps the question of why will become less relevant for them. Then other goals, such as how to cope with their sibling in the present, can be addressed.

Competitiveness and jealousy. Another common theme is the amount of competitiveness and jealousy reported by the participants. Jealousy would arise mainly out of an attempt to get the attention or favour of the children's parents or caregivers. These feelings of competitiveness and jealousy would manifest themselves in several different ways, such as by spreading lies about the victimized sibling so that others would think poorly of him/her, setting up the sibling to get in trouble with their parents, or making a concerted effort to perform at a higher level than the abused sibling.

Bob: *...she would start to do things to annoy me or get me in trouble on purpose... She definitely had... better ideas of how... the parental system worked than I did. It was really frustrating for me to... try to get back at my sister because she knew how mom thought... My sister had the total picture in mind of how to get [me] into trouble... Her intense desire to have this attention continues through to this day. She's willing to say and do just about anything to make sure she's the focus... She starts to... pick on me... Other people... have said, "Yeah, your sister treats you differently... and is somewhat competitive." ...Playing raquetball together or something. She'd definitely give it every effort to be as good as me or better.*

Margaret: *I think a lot of it had to do with... my dad liked me and she couldn't handle that. My dad really liked me. I've always been my dad's favourite. I got a lot of attention. She probably didn't like that. She was always somebody who needed... all the attention all the time. So the minute somebody else got the attention, she would react in some way.*

Competitiveness and jealousy are components of "sibling rivalry", which was defined in a previous section as feelings of jealousy, guilt, rejection, isolation, resentment, and anxiety that often occur for an older sibling when the younger child is brought into the home (Catiglia, 1989). Rivalry also involves competition between siblings for the attention, love, affection, and recognition of the parents (Leung & Robson, 1991). Many people consider sibling rivalry to be a normal part of the sibling relationship. However, acceptable levels of sibling rivalry can escalate into violent or abusive behaviors, which can be destructive to one's development (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984). In examining the narratives of the participants in this study, it appears that their experiences were more violent and destructive than would be considered to be an acceptable level of sibling rivalry. When one considers the definition of abuse, one can see that the interactions between the participants and their sibling were more concerned with gaining power and control, and hurting the victimized sibling, than with gaining parental attention or recognition.

With regards to counselling, it is important to explain to parents involved in family counselling that there is a difference between sibling rivalry and sibling abuse. Providing them with definitions and concrete examples will help them to see that there is a difference between the two and that intervention is necessary when rivalry escalates into abusive behavior. By providing information to the parents, they can come to realize that sibling maltreatment is not inevitable and they can be taught appropriate methods to help their children. Parents can also be encouraged to refrain from treating their children differentially or encouraging competition by comparing the children, which can influence the level of rivalry that exists between siblings (Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Vandell & Bailey, 1992).

Ramifications of the abuse. The participants in this study were able to identify long-lasting ramifications of the maltreatment they experienced from their sibling. Some of these effects are personal, which includes loss of self-esteem, lack of ability to trust others, and feeling the need to prove oneself. Other effects are social in nature, such as broken relationships between family members.

Jackie: *I used to vow that when I became an adult I would never, ever again fear anyone... and that was something that was really, really important to me... I had so much fear in me and helplessness and I built up walls... [I had] no self-esteem. None. None whatsoever. [I was] just a scared little rabbit. I was a really, really hard worker. Always did my best and always tried to please everybody... like I was proving... the rationale behind my existence.*

Amy: *...in some ways it affects me now negatively... mainly when certain things come up I don't really feel sure of myself... Like the constantly putting me down and telling me I wasn't good at things that I thought I was good at... So... I question myself probably more than I would have if I hadn't lived with that... all the time.*

Margaret: *...it still bothers me that the family is split because of all this... It would be nice to be friendly with all my brothers and sisters, but I don't trust them. It's just too much water under the bridge... They've come to the realization too late that... I wasn't the black sheep. It's too late.*

Many of the ramifications of sibling maltreatment have been discussed previously, such as poor self-esteem, depression, anxiety, lack of trust in others, drug or alcohol problems, and relationship problems (Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Perry et al., 1992; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Wiehe, 1990). According to Straus et al. (1980) many of the negative effects of sibling abuse are similar to those which occur as a result of other forms of family violence. The participants in this study support these claims, as they reported many of these ramifications and stated that they continue to suffer from these effects in the.

In many cases, it will be necessary to provide counselling to individuals who have been abused by a sibling in order to work through these issues. This is especially important in the case of sibling abuse because it is not accepted as a form of abuse by many people in society, so there may be less social support and acceptance of this type of abuse. Thus, many victims of sibling violence are left on their own to deal with these issues. Counsellors need to be aware of the seriousness of sibling maltreatment and be able to validate and support their clients while working through these negative effects.

Loyalty to the perpetrating sibling. The final theme shared by the participants involves the tremendous amount of loyalty they feel towards their siblings, which is evidenced by their willingness to help their siblings in times of need. This is surprising, considering the level of maltreatment the participants have received from their siblings. For some participants, loyalty was displayed even in adolescence. For example, Amy would be a friend to her brother, even though he would repeatedly humiliate her in front of his friends. She felt a very strong need to "stick together" with her brother through their family problems and would stand by him despite the abuse. For the majority of the participants, this loyalty continued into adulthood. For example, Margaret took her sister into her home when she was having personal difficulties and had nowhere else to go.

Amy: *...we would get to school at a certain time and there would be a certain amount of time before classes would start. He would say, "You come with me. You walk with me to my locker. You stick with me." He would make me go with him because he didn't want to be alone. So I'd go with him... and he would make me stay at his locker until his friends got there and then he would say something mean to me like: "Get away from me. What are you doing here? Why are you following me?" ...I almost had a sense that he needed... a friend or something. So I would do it. I guess just 'cause I had this whole idea that we were just trying to get by and we were trying to survive, so we've got to stick together.*

Margaret: *...I took her in because... her [husband]... was at his wits end. He couldn't do anymore. So she phoned me up [and said], "Will you take me in?" ...So I said, "Of course." I really felt that... she's not mentally ill, but not developed, and so, aren't you supposed to help each other? Isn't that what family's about? She lived at my place for a couple of months...*

The theme of loyalty is related to the intense desire of the participants to become closer to their siblings and maintain a relationship with them. Thus, this theme is also related to the strong ties of the sibling bond. It appears that the participants in this study have extremely strong values with regards to family and were willing to sacrifice their own well-being for their brother or sister. This is paradoxical and contrary to what one would expect. As stated by previous researchers, and as evidenced by the behaviour of the participants in this study, the fact that the siblings have known each other for their entire lives and have shared a world together with their families has likely created a bond that is difficult to sever, despite the dysfunction that exists in their relationship (Bank, 1992; Cicerelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994).

This sense of loyalty is commendable and is a strength that should be pointed out by the counsellor working with victims of sibling maltreatment. It is possible that the acknowledgment of this trait will give some clients the strength to persevere in their attempts to reconcile with their sibling, despite discouragement and disappointments along the way. It may also provide a sense of control for the victimized siblings, as they are making a choice to stand by their sibling and provide a source of support and love to them. Although there may be continued difficulties with their sibling, they are in control of the situation because they have made the choice to be there, as opposed to the incidents that occurred in childhood. This needs to be pointed out by the counsellor, in order to provide a sense of strength, independence, and empowerment.

The experiences of the four participants in this study have many features in common. Taken as a whole, they create a picture of sibling maltreatment which has many different factors involved, such as a belief that the maltreatment they received could be defined as "abuse", avoidance as a method of coping, a lack of parental intervention, the struggle with issues of blame, confusion over "why" they were being maltreated, and the continuance of a dysfunctional sibling relationship into adulthood. There were also positive aspects to these sibling relationships, which include a growth in independence while working through abuse issues, a strong sense of loyalty to one's sibling, and feelings of compassion for the troubles the perpetrating siblings were experiencing. These common themes are helpful in understanding the experience of sibling maltreatment and lead to many counselling implications which are important to consider when working with victims of sibling abuse.

Paradigm cases.

Paradigm cases are similar to exemplars, in that they are meaning units taken from the experiences of one who has been involved in a particular phenomenon. However, they differ from exemplars in that they encompass the meaning that an individual has created for the entire experience. As described by Leonard (1989), paradigm cases lead to an "understanding of how an individual's actions and interpretations emerge from his or her situational context: the individual's concerns, practices, and background meanings" (p. 54). Thus, a paradigm case summarizes the meaning of a phenomenon for a particular individual, in light of his/her personality, background, and thought processes.

In this section, I provide paradigm cases of the experience of sibling maltreatment from each of the participant's points of view, and then relate these interpretations to a specific clinical situation that can be understood and explained with the use of the paradigm case. As described by Leonard (1989), "family resemblances" are drawn between an individual's experiences and other potentially similar cases (p. 54). Thus, I have used the experiences of the participants to develop possible scenarios and family situations in which sibling abuse may occur. From a counselling perspective, this is very important, as sibling abuse is not a recognized social issue, and many clients, especially children, may be victims of sibling maltreatment that is dismissed by themselves and their families. Thus, if a counsellor is aware of the potential situations in which sibling maltreatment may be an issue, he/she can be open to the possibility of sibling abuse and can question the clients regarding their sibling relationship.

The following depictions are not intended to provide a comprehensive description of all family types in which sibling abuse may occur, and I am not implying that sibling abuse will unequivocally occur within a family with the following characteristics. I am simply providing possible family scenarios which would create an opportunity for children to act out aggressively with one another. In a similar way to child sexual abuse, with which there is a list of characteristics for the counsellor to be aware of when working with a child, these are characteristics for the counsellor to be conscious of when working with a family.

Amy. The experience of sibling maltreatment has been reconciled in Amy's mind as being the result of an abusive and neglectful family environment. She does not blame her brother for his actions, but believes that he did the best he could in the situation they were in. She feels that despite the abuse, her brothers and she managed to "stick together" throughout their family problems. Although her brother still behaves in ways that hurt her, and they are not as close as she would like, she believes that his childhood has damaged him to the point where he is incapable of showing love to others. This makes her feel sad, but she seems to feel that in the future, she may be able to bridge the gap between them by putting in the effort to become closer. Over the years, she has tried to analyze their relationship to figure out why he would treat her so cruelly; however, she has not been able to come up with any answers. Thus, she has stopped examining the past, and instead looks to the future.

Amy: *I... don't blame him for it. He was trying to get by. He didn't know any other way. I know that the way I was behaving back then was directly related to what my father had convinced me of, and so, if my brother had even more pressure, more... instilled in him, I can only imagine how difficult that was for him. So I just feel more compassion for him than anger. I tend to blame everything on my dad. I've thought about this a lot and... I always felt like we were sticking together. He was really mean and this and that, but... I just felt like we were sticking together. There wasn't a lot of positive stuff. But I guess... there was still two other people [Fred and Jack] who could understand what I was going through...*

I've thought about it so much over my life that I don't see any point of trying to figure it out anymore... Now I just don't worry about it and see what happens... Trying to figure out the specific why's is not of use to me... I just try to look at it more the big picture. We were trying to survive a bad situation and it's no longer that bad situation and so... go from here. If I want to have a better

> *relationship with my brother then...most of it depends on me... because my brother is not one to reach out. He's not the first person to initiate something. So...if I initiate something and really work hard on hugging him... or trying to talk about... more meaningful things, I could, but I just... don't feel like doing that right now.*

The main issue with this type of case is that the family is going through difficulties and all of the family members are experiencing a great deal of stress. Previous research has also indicated that family difficulties often set the stage for sibling maltreatment in the family (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Crane, 1997; Green, 1984; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Whipple & Finton, 1996). It seems that in these families, the parents are overwhelmed with their own problems, leaving the children to look after themselves for a great part of the time. Thus, the children may feel a great deal of pressure and responsibility, but do not have an outlet for these feelings as their parents are not available to help them.

Eventually, the children may begin to act out with each other, as they have no other safe place to express their pent-up emotions. Due to the negative emotional climate in the family and the lack of guidance, the perpetrating child may feel a loss of control, and may attempt to gain it back by exerting power over a weaker sibling (Wiehe, 1990). In response, the victimized sibling may refrain from telling the parents this is going on, as he/she does not want to create any more problems for the family. The victimized sibling also feels that the parents are not available to help and that this is a situation he/she has to deal with alone. This can lead to the development of learned helplessness (Bennett, 1990; Gelles et al., 1985; Herzberger, 1996) where the victim resigns him/herself to a life of abuse until he/she can move out of the household. Since issues are not discussed openly in these families, the two siblings do not discuss the problems they have in their relationship. Thus, problems are likely to continue into adulthood.

Margaret. Margaret has attributed her sister's behaviour to several factors: a need for attention, jealousy, and her sister's mental delay. She believes that her sister led a very sad life, and was reacting to the fact that she felt inadequate and was not at peace with herself. Since her sister has passed away, Margaret has come to terms with their relationship, in that she has accepted the fact that her sister was the one with the problem and that she is not to blame. With her death, Margaret said good-bye to her and is moving ahead with her life without looking back.

> *Margaret:* *She was only 50 when she died... and what has she left behind? She leaves a really sad legacy, I think, because... what's there? [I've realized that] she was the one with the problems. It wasn't me. I think a lot of it was jealousy that she didn't get to where I did. She did say to somebody once that [I] had a perfect life. And I do. I'm happy. Not because I have the Ph.D... I have debts just like anybody else. I'm happy because I'm happy. She doesn't have that contentment. That inner peace... she could never get it and I think that's probably her problem in life.*
>
> *I said good-bye to her. I think I learned to forgive and put it behind you and go on. I think one of the worst things is to let it fester and fester and fester, and it just eats you up into little bits. Life is too short for that. I went [to my hometown] with one of my cousins. It took me three hours to walk around the town and say good-bye and walk back and I haven't been back since and I don't care if I ever go back. I don't need to. That time of my life is over.*

This case is one in which sibling rivalry has likely escalated to the point of being abusive, as described in the previous literature (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984). Within this type of family, it appears that the parents engage in blatant favoritism and differential treatment of the children, which can contribute to feelings of jealousy and competition (Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). According to these authors, the child who feels inadequate may attempt to gain control and power over the situation by being cruel to the favored child.

This case is also related to another type of family, in which the parents are abusive towards the children. In this type of environment, children learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve disputes and imitate the behavior that is displayed by their parents (Green, 1984; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Straus et al., 1980). Once again, it is likely that learned helplessness will develop in this type of situation, as the parents have created an environment that is unsafe for the children, so that they are likely to feel that telling their parents about their abusive sibling will not make a difference in the way they are treated (Bennett, 1990; Wiehe, 1990). Thus, the child is likely to keep the abuse a secret and cope with it as best as possible until he/she can escape the situation. In adulthood, there may be many rifts between family members, as they have been involved in an abusive and dysfunctional family system for many years, and do not know how to relate to one another in a healthy manner.

Bob. Bob attributes the experiences he has had with his sister to a difference in mentality between the two of them. He sees his sister as selfish, self-involved, and eager for attention. He believes that this intense need for attention causes her to put him down and treat him poorly. However, he has reached a point where he has tired of her using put downs and demeaning jokes to make herself look better and plans to talk with her about his feelings as soon as he has an opportunity. He believes that she has a good heart and that when she realizes how much she has hurt him, she will stop treating him with such disrespect. His hope is that eventually they will be able to become closer and grow as friends.

> *Bob:* *...her intense desire to have this attention continues through to this day. What happens now is basically an extension of what grew to be her nature... way back in high school... I just figure she has to be, at the sake of being petty, she tries to grasp the attention. She cares about number one... herself. That's it. I'd rather her treat me as I treated her and with more openness and respect, especially in front of others... because I think that would push her and me into a kind of closer, more... better kind of sibling relationship [and] to grow as friends... I think in the near future, if the same situation arises, which it undoubtedly will, that I should do now what I should have done way back then, and say, "Stop it." I suppose my... more or less avoidance or backing away from the noose doesn't cure it. It just pushes it aside. It's like having a drink. That might [help you] forget your trouble for the time being, but it doesn't go away until you actually do something about it. And I have to do that.*

This situation is similar to the previous one, in that sibling rivalry has escalated to the point of being abusive. In this scenario, one of the children is attempting to gain attention and affection from the parents by belittling and putting down one of the siblings. One of the most important aspects of this situation is the extent to which the parents minimize the treatment the victimized sibling is receiving. As stated in the previous literature, these parents believe that sibling conflict is natural and inevitable, and do not feel that any intervention is necessary (Cicerelli, 1995; Crane, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1990). In this case, the child may make attempts to enlist the help of the parents, but as they do not believe this treatment is a serious issue, they continue to minimize or ignore it. Thus, the child feels alone and helpless in his/her situation. It is probable that resentment and anger will build for the victimized child towards the perpetrating sibling and the parents, and these feelings may be carried into adulthood.

Jackie. Jackie feels that the abusive situation with her brother arose out of resentment that he has over their mother's death. As described by Jackie, from his viewpoint, his mother left for the hospital and never returned. Instead, there was a little baby in her place. Jackie states that she feels so much guilt over this that she would rather have had her mother live through the childbirth, and for her to have died. She believes that her mother's death had many repercussions, such as their father giving up on life in order to be with her. Although Jackie feels certain that she is correct in her assumptions, she would eventually like to ask her brother if these assumptions are true. In the meantime, she lives with her guilt. She does not know how to deal with it as she sees no way to make it up to her brother that she "caused" the death of their mother.

Jackie: *My mother died when I was born. I think [my brother's] responses to me... very much emphasized to me that I was to blame for him losing his mom and... I think I've taken that responsibility on. [If given the chance to change anything about the past] I would have to go right back to the beginning... and... I would let mom live... and let me not... because... I firmly believe that... my dad... gave up and preferred to die and be with mom to staying and caring for us kids. So the whole... scenario would have been very, very different for everyone concerned... I guess I need to know if all my assumptions are true. Did he really feel like [I] took [his] mother and brought the little baby [instead]?*

In this situation, the perpetrating sibling is suffering from some sort of personal issue. In this case, it was the death of his mother, but there could be many other factors which could contribute to personal problems, such as being abused, having learning difficulties, being bullied in school, having a physical disability, and so on (Crane, 1997). Although the personal issues of the perpetrator have not been examined extensively in previous literature, it seems logical that a tragic event could lead up to intense negative feelings in the perpetrator. Thus, if the trauma is not dealt with appropriately, the young child may be left with feelings of grief, anger, resentment, and fear that are too much for him/her to handle on his/her own. The focus of these feelings may then become a weaker sibling, who is used in order to obtain a sense of control (Wiehe, 1990).

This case is also related to the situation described above, in which the parents are abusive towards the children. Thus, the violent child is surrounded by violent adults, and this behavior becomes normalized and accepted as a means for dealing with conflict (Green, 1984; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980). As these children grow older, it is likely that they will have a dysfunctional adult relationship, as the perpetrator will have never learned how to deal with his/her emotions. A lot of powerful feelings may exist between the two, but they will have not learned any appropriate methods for expressing these feelings.

These paradigm cases are used to show the meaning that has been attached to the experience of sibling maltreatment by each of the participants and how each case can be generalized to a type of family situation that would create an atmosphere in which sibling abuse may occur. Each of the participants has interpreted their experiences in different ways and attributed the abuse to diverse factors. It is notable that many of these factors have been alluded to in previous literature as being important aspects of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment, such as neglectful or abusive parents (Green, 1984; Straus et al., 1980; Herzberger, 1996), minimization of the abuse by the parents (Wiehe, 1990), the escalation of sibling rivalry (Leung &

Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984), lack of supervision (Wiehe, 1990), and a negative emotional climate in the family (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Green, 1984). It is extremely important that counsellors be aware of the diverse factors involved in the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment, in order to be alert to the possibility that sibling abuse may be occurring in some family clients, and to deal with this possibility appropriately by inquiring into the nature and quality of the sibling relationship.

Unfortunately, this study was limited with the use of only four participants. If more participants had been involved, more family situations could have been identified in which sibling abuse is likely to occur. However, this was an exploratory study, and was helpful in identifying potential abusive situations. These preliminary ideas about family situations which can contribute to an abusive relationship between siblings need to be examined further in future studies.

Unique individual experiences.

Within the above interpretations of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment there are many common elements, as described with the use of themes and paradigm cases. However, the participants in this study also described some feelings and events which were unique to their experience. Although the other participants did not share in these experiences, they are important because of the meaning that has been attached to them by the participants. Walker (1996) writes that the uniqueness of experience is as valuable as the commonalities, because each person has a different background, personality, and outlook, which will influence which events are remembered and made meaningful. Thus, I have described these notable, unique experiences in order to provide the reader with insight into the individualized nature of interpretation and experience.

As stated previously, an important aspect of sibling maltreatment is the extent to which it is normalized by parents and professionals (Brody et al., 1992; Felson, 1983; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Newman, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987; Straus et al., 1980). For the participants in this study, only Margaret believed that what was happening to her was "normal". She did not come to the realization that she was being maltreated until adulthood and she still struggles with the definition of what happened to her. She believes that this is largely a product of the times when she grew up, as family violence was still ignored or tolerated, and considered to be "the family's business."

> *Margaret:* *I thought it was normal. I think a lot of kids feel, when they're abused like that, they think it's normal... I went along with whatever [happened] because it was expected, I thought. You think it's normal, so [I thought] I must have been so bad that I deserved it. You had to respect your older sister, didn't you? That was what I thought. "She's my older sister. She knows better. She's the boss. She's looking after me and I did this wrong and I should have done it the way she wanted me to." I don't know if beating the hell out of somebody is abuse because when I was brought up, that was normal. My sister tried to keep me in tow. Today we define it as physical abuse, but at the time, I don't know. At the time... I didn't think of it as abuse. But looking back... yes, it was abuse.*

The other participants realized that what was happening with their sibling was not normal, which contributed to their feelings of confusion over "why" this was happening to them.

> *Amy:* *I couldn't understand why he would do that. I didn't know any of my friends whose brothers did that to them...*

Although it is encouraging that three of the four participants realized that what was occurring was not normal, it is impossible to know the opinion of parents and other family members. Further research will need to examine the perspectives of parents, other family members, the perpetrating siblings, and professionals, in order to determine if views of sibling abuse are changing throughout the family system and society. I believe that education of parents and professionals is necessary, in order for them to realize the prevalence and potential damaging effects of sibling maltreatment.

Another unique perspective offered by one of the participants revolves around the issue of blame. For Amy, Margaret, and Jackie, the blame does not rest solely on their siblings' shoulders. They feel that there were external factors, such as family problems, intellectual difficulties, and resentment over a parent's death, which caused or contributed to the abusive behaviour their siblings were engaged in. However, Bob puts the blame on his sister. He feels that the problems they had with one another originated out of her personality or her need for attention, and he does not offer any other reasons for why the maltreatment would occur. Thus, in contrast with the other participants, he does not feel any compassion or guilt over the experiences he had with his sister.

Bob: *...around... age [12 or 13]... this change in attitude... started to occur. It's interesting to look back and try to see the pivotal point when the friendly nature and play was there, to [her thinking], "Well this guy's okay, but he's kind of a toad." There was probably something way back at that point that somehow changed in her mind. She's willing to say and do just about anything to make sure she's the focus... If she's with me one on one, she's okay. But in front of an audience, she has to ham it up. She cares about number one... herself.*

This is an important point to make with regards to the adult relationship between siblings. It appears to be much more difficult for Bob to make amends and put the past behind him than it does for the other participants. While the others feel compassion for their siblings, Bob feels a considerable amount of anger and resentment. It is likely that underneath the anger is a great deal of hurt at being treated so poorly by his sister. From a counselling point of view, it would be necessary for him to work through these feelings in order to get past the abuse and create a healthy relationship with his sister.

Amy offers another unique aspect to the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment. One of the questions that has been raised in previous research is the possibility that an abusive sibling will continue to be abusive in adulthood with his/her romantic partners, perpetuating a cycle of violence (Herzberger, 1996). Although the other three participants did not mention this issue, Amy stated that her brother can be cruel to his girlfriends through teasing and "picking on" them. Although this area is in need of more direct investigation, it is interesting that Amy has noticed a trend in her brother's behaviour.

Amy: *...he has had girlfriends... and... he picks on these women and he picks on them. He's constantly picking on them. He laughs at that, but it's a lot of the same [treatment I had from him]... It's all in fun now, or at least, it's how he has fun. So, he's not cruel or anything, but he's always teasing and picking on them. I totally feel for this girl. The one now, I just think, I should just tell her, "I would not put up with that." He does that with everyone that he dated. I don't know how they handle it...*

A notable feature of Bob's story is the fact that his situation is highly atypical, according to the biases that are prevalent in our society. Previous researchers have examined such aspects of the phenomenon as gender, age, and age gap between siblings (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1990). Although results from these studies have been inconclusive, it is still a belief in our society that females are abused more frequently than males. Thus, it is highly unusual that one of the participants in this study was male, with a younger sister verbally abusing him. The story of Bob serves as a reminder that the perpetrator of sibling maltreatment can be male or female, younger or older, and can engage in physical or verbal methods of maltreatment. It is important that counsellors be aware of any biases they have about the perpetrators of abuse and be open to any of these possibilities.

Thus, there are some significant unique points that the participants have made with regards to the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment. It is interesting that many of these points are related to areas of research, such as the normalcy of sibling maltreatment and the cycle of violence. Taken as a whole, the themes, exemplars, paradigm cases, and unique experiences of sibling maltreatment create a description of the phenomenon which indicates that sibling violence can be serious and damaging to the victims. Although the participants were able to identify positive aspects of their sibling relationships and were able to learn from their experiences, the feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, resentment, hurt, and betrayal that are described by the participants signify that the area of sibling maltreatment is in need of further investigation.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The four stories told by the participants in this research project have provided considerable insight into the experiences of those who have been maltreated by a sibling. The stories create a picture of sibling abuse which appears to be much more serious and damaging than many would expect. As stated previously, the conventional view on sibling relationships is that conflict is an inevitable and natural aspect of the exchanges that occur between siblings. However, the participants in the current study have provided an image of the sibling relationship that is much different and describe childhoods that were filled with humiliation and fear. The findings from this study have led to a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon of sibling abuse and the serious negative effects which can occur as a result of such abuse. The damage and ramifications that were reported by the participants are similar to those suffered by victims of other types of violence. Thus, it is my hope that parents and professionals will begin to become more aware of the potential damage siblings can cause one another so that sibling abuse will be placed among the other forms of family violence that are currently of high social priority.

Main Research Findings

Many of the elements that were embedded in the participants' stories are interesting and hold a great deal of importance in one's attempt to understand the experience of sibling maltreatment. Although these findings are limited by the fact that there were only four participants involved in this study, they provide preliminary evidence that is deserving of attention in future studies. Many of the themes that emerged from these stories correspond to current theory and assumptions which have been made about sibling abuse. Although some of the findings in the current study replicated those found in previous qualitative studies, there were also several original aspects of the phenomenon that were discovered in this study.

One of the main findings is the fact that all participants labeled the treatment they received from their sibling as "abuse." Wilson and Fromuth (1997) conducted a study which addressed this issue and found that the majority of participants in their study did not label high levels of physical aggression as "abuse." The discrepancy in these findings may be due to the fact that the participants in the current study were volunteers and would likely only volunteer to participate in such a study if they considered the treatment they received to have been excessive. In the study conducted by Wilson and Fromuth, the sample consisted of 202 university students drawn from a psychology research pool. Thus, these participants likely represented a broad range of sibling conflict levels. In spite of this fact, these researchers found that over one-third of the sample did consider themselves to have been abused, which, as the authors state "is particularly noteworthy given the non-clinical nature of the sample" (p. 5). Thus, the findings in their study did indicate a high level of abuse among siblings.

Another important finding in this study is the extent to which the accounts of sibling abuse provided by the participants correlated with theories and definitions provided in previous literature in the area of family violence. For example, all participants described the maltreatment as being one-sided, which is an inherent component of the definition of abuse provided by Cicirelli (1995) and Katz and colleagues (1992). Furthermore, the participants also alluded to the fact that they felt helpless in their situations, which is congruent with the learned helplessness theory proposed by Bennett (1990).

Many researchers have postulated that the ramifications and negative effects of sibling abuse would be similar to those seen in victims of child or spousal abuse (Brody et al., 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Straus et al., 1980). It seems that in the current study, these assumptions were supported, as the participants described such negative ramifications as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, difficulty trusting others, and impaired social skills. These effects are also similar to the negative effects described by participants in earlier qualitative studies on sibling abuse (Crane, 1997; Wiehe, 1990). The severity of these negative effects is notable, as is the fact that many of these effects lasted into adulthood. Thus, from the results in this study, it appears that sibling abuse is a serious issue with many deleterious consequences.

Another important finding in the current study is the role of the parents in the sibling relationship. In all cases, the siblings had parents who were not available to help them with the abusive situation. In some cases the parents were abusive themselves, which may have influenced the perpetrating sibling to use violence as a means to resolve conflict. This is described as the Cyclical Hypothesis of Abuse by Herzberger (1996). In other cases the parents minimized the abuse, which can contribute to feelings of learned helplessness in the victimized child (Bennett, 1990). Wiehe (1990) and Crane (1997) also found that parents did not respond appropriately to the abuse that was occurring with the participants in their studies. This point is extremely important, as parents need to take more responsibility for their children's treatment of one another.

One of the most surprising findings was the fact that all of the participants expressed a desire to maintain a relationship with their sibling in adulthood. In fact, they stated that they would like to be able to create a closer relationship with their brother or sister. This is contrary to what one would expect, considering the abuse the participants received from their siblings. Participants also described feelings of extreme loyalty to their siblings and told many stories about helping their brother or sister in times of need. These findings indicate that the sibling bond is very strong and that victimized siblings still feel a strong yearning to be close to the perpetrating sibling, despite the feelings of resentment, hurt, anger, fear, humiliation, and degradation they suffered for many years.

Unfortunately, another finding in this study was the fact that the relationships that the participants had with their siblings in adulthood were extremely superficial. This was also found to be the case for the majority of the participants in the study conducted by Crane (1997). Many of the perpetrating siblings continued to engage in acts that were hurtful to the participants and did not respond very warmly to efforts made by the participants to become closer. Thus, attempts at developing a closer relationship have been rejected, and the participants continue to suffer from a lack of a fulfilling sibling relationship in adulthood.

All of the siblings demonstrated tremendous coping skills throughout their lives. Similar coping skills, such as fighting back and developing an avoidance strategy were described by Crane (1997). Since the participants in this study were still being disappointed and rejected by their siblings in adulthood, they continued to modify these coping skills into the present. Thus, each of the participants had a plan for coming to some sort of resolution with their sibling, such as talking to their sibling about their feelings or saying a final good-bye to the past.

Finally, it is noteworthy to mention the effectiveness of the narrative method that was used in the current study. Not only did this method provide a means for providing an accurate, detailed account of the experience of sibling maltreatment from the victims' point of view, but it also served as a positive experience for many of the participants. By giving them an opportunity to speak openly about aspects of the phenomenon that were personally meaningful, the participants were given a chance to voice feelings, concerns, and thoughts that many had not openly acknowledged before. A few of the participants came to new realizations about their relationships through the interview process and expressed gratitude at gaining a new perspective on their sibling relationship. When given an opportunity to read their narratives in the corroborative interview, they all stated that their stories were captured accurately and completely. As Bob stated, his story was told "perfectly", and, as written by Amy on the bottom of her narrative:

> Thank you for writing such an accurate account of my feelings about my relationship with my older brother. Re-remembering these difficult times was hard, but I hope it provides some good information towards your study.

Thus, telling these stories appears to have been mainly a positive experience for the participants, leading to an outlet for emotion, a reexamination of the past, an organizing of events, a therapeutic release, and an impetus to take action in the future. It also seemed to be beneficial in that the participants took pride in the fact that they were using their experiences to create awareness on the topic of sibling maltreatment and possibly make a difference to other abused siblings. For myself, I felt incredibly privileged to have been allowed into the private worlds of these individuals, who shared many personal aspects of their lives and feelings that they stated that they had not shared with anybody before.

Implications For Counselling

The findings from the current study hold many implications for the field of counselling. Although these implications have been stated in the previous chapter, they will be reiterated briefly here, as they are extremely important for counsellors to take note of and use in counselling with families and children. These implications involve working with clients in all aspects of the phenomenon, such as prevention, intervention, and treatment.

With regards to prevention, it is important for counsellors to educate potential parents about sibling abuse, teaching them appropriate methods of discipline and strategies for educating their children on how to resolve conflict in an appropriate and healthy manner. I believe one of the main problems with regards to sibling violence is the lack of information and knowledge regarding the seriousness of this type of abuse. Thus, it is essential that information be provided to the community, professionals, and parents regarding the prevalence and negative effects that can occur as a result of sibling maltreatment. This could be accomplished through several means, such as articles in journals or parenting magazines, parenting classes or videos, pre-natal classes, or brochures.

Green (1984) writes that parents who do not respond to their children's sibling abuse could be charged with abuse or neglect themselves, as they are allowing one of their children to be abused by the other. Thus, it is important that parents be aware of the destructive nature of sibling maltreatment, so that they will take the effort to intervene in dysfunctional interactions between their children. It is also important that children be taught that abusive behaviors are inappropriate and destructive. Counsellors can assist parents in the process of teaching children appropriate methods of managing anger and conflict. In addition to building awareness in one's children, parents need to provide adequate supervision, violence-proof the home, reward positive interactions, and strive to create an open and honest relationship with their children (Wiehe, 1990). Hopefully, with the dissemination of information and the building of awareness, the incidence of sibling abuse can be ameliorated.

Another important aspect to intervention is teaching parents the signs of an abusive sibling relationship. This would include describing the difference between conflict or rivalry and abuse. Parents need to be provided with accurate definitions, as well as behavioral indicators and concrete examples of abusive behavior so that they will recognize dysfunctional behavior when it is occurring. Counsellors can describe the negative effects of minimizing or ignoring the maltreatment, such as the development of learned helplessness, in order to educate parents on the importance of their role in preventing maltreatment in their children.

Children can also be taught the difference between conflict and abuse and shown appropriate methods for handling disputes with one another. They can also be encouraged to be open with their parents and report any maltreatment they receive from a sibling. If parents are not able to prevent one of their children from being abusive, they should be encouraged to seek professional help in order to help their child deal with his/her issues and develop skills for negotiating conflict in a healthy manner. The counsellor can help the family to identify any stressors or traumatic events in the child's life that may be causing him to act out. The child can then be taught more appropriate ways to deal with these issues.

In families where sibling abuse has occurred, it may be necessary for the victimized sibling to work through some of his/her issues through counselling. As stated by Wiehe (1990) many victims of sibling maltreatment have to seek professional help in order to work through the emotional suffering they have endured at the hands of a sibling. The counsellor must be aware of the seriousness of the issue and help the client come to a resolution about his/her past. Many of the issues that may be discussed in counselling were discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

When working with a family or individual, the counsellor must be aware of the possibility that sibling abuse could be an issue, especially in cases where the family is undergoing a great deal of stress, the parents treat their children differentially, the parents are abusive, the parents tend to minimize or ignore high levels of conflict between their children, or one of the children is suffering from a personal issue. In an initial counselling interview with a family, the counsellor should question the family members on the quality of the sibling relationship, in order to confirm or deny the possibility of sibling maltreatment. If high levels of conflict are occurring, it is important that the counsellor assess the situation in case one of the siblings is being victimized. If this is found to be the case, the counsellor should treat the abuse as a family issue and encourage the parents, as well as the siblings, to take responsibility in treating one another in ways that are not destructive and abusive.

The main issue with regards to implications for counselling is the need for building awareness in parents and children, as well as professionals. Sibling maltreatment is an issue which is largely accepted and tolerated throughout society. All facets of the system, from families to teachers to the helping professions, need to be educated with regards to the prevalence and severity of the problem of sibling maltreatment.

Limitations to the Current Study

One of the main limitations to the current study was the fact that there was only four participants involved in this investigation into sibling maltreatment. This was largely due to the fact that the study was an exploratory one, with the aim of answering preliminary questions about the experience of sibling maltreatment for the victims. Despite the small number examined, many of the findings replicated those that have been found in previous research in the area. These findings also supported theories which have been proposed about the nature of sibling abuse. This enabled me to derive several clinical implications that may prove useful to clinicians and families involved in these issues. Thus, even though the present study examined the lives of only four individuals, their experiences were extremely valuable in providing a picture of sibling abuse which answered my research questions and will hopefully lead to more investigation into the area of sibling maltreatment.

Another limitation to this study is the fact that the four participants were all well educated individuals from middle to upper-class family backgrounds. Thus, this sample may not be representative of other individuals who have been maltreated by a sibling. Furthermore, only volunteers that had maltreatment from one sibling were included in the study. Thus, the experiences described by these four participants may not be representative of those who may have been victimized by two or more siblings. It is my belief that the dynamics would be very different in a situation where two or more siblings were abusing another sibling collaboratively. This is an issue which is deserving of attention in future research projects.

The current study was further limited by the fact that the participants provided retrospective accounts of the maltreatment they received from a sibling. Several of the participants stated that they had difficulties in remembering all of the events that occurred, as well as the details of the events that they did recall. It would have been interesting, and perhaps more accurate, to have interviewed children or adolescents who were currently involved in abusive situations with their siblings. However, gaining access and permission to interview such participants may have proved difficult. Also, if these participants were still involved in an abusive situation, they may have been reluctant or fearful of telling the truth about their experiences with their sibling. Despite these difficulties, this is another possible avenue to explore in future research.

Directions for Future Research

As this study was an exploratory one, it has opened up many different directions to follow and areas to examine in more detail in future research projects. As previously stated, some of these future directions may follow from the limitations of this study, such as including a greater number of research participants, selecting participants from more diverse backgrounds and socio-economic levels, and recruiting children or adolescents as participants.

One of the difficulties with qualitative research is the fact that it is difficult to generalize from findings derived from such a limited number of participants. Thus, it would be helpful if one of the areas of future research involved a quantitative analysis of sibling maltreatment, with the aim of confirming the results which have been postulated in this and other qualitative studies. A quantitative design with a large number of participants could be used to test the various themes that were extracted in this study to see if they hold true for the majority of victims of sibling maltreatment. In this way, qualitative and quantitative studies can complement one another, with qualitative studies being used as a means for discovery, and quantitative studies being used as a means for confirmation (Gall et al., 1996).

Another aspect of the phenomenon that needs to be explored further is the perpetrating sibling's point of view on the manner in which he/she treated his/her sibling. This is an especially important area to explore, as the participants in this study expressed a great deal of confusion over "why" the abuse occurred. This is also an area that has not been addressed adequately in the previous literature: *Why* does the perpetrating sibling maltreat his/her brother or sister? This question could be examined using similar qualitative methods as were used in the current study, in order to discover the meaning of the experience for the perpetrators of sibling maltreatment. It would be especially interesting to recruit sibling dyads as participants in such a study, in order to obtain both perspectives and see how these perspectives differed. In examining the perpetrators' point of view, it would be important to question him/her on triggers for sibling abuse, reasons why he/she acted out in this way, and how engaging in such maltreatment made him or her feel. The answers to these questions would be extremely helpful in developing prevention programs for sibling abuse, as counsellors would be able to help both the victims and perpetrators to identify and avoid triggers for abuse. The counsellor would also be able to help the perpetrating sibling find other methods of having his/her needs met and finding healthier outlets for his/her emotions.

The perspective of the parents in cases of sibling maltreatment is also in need of investigation. Due to the extent to which many parents seem to minimize or tolerate sibling maltreatment, it is necessary to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon. Once again, a qualitative, exploratory study examining the parents' point of view would be very helpful in developing prevention tactics and intervention strategies. Parents would be able to comment on their values, beliefs, and feelings regarding sibling maltreatment, as well as methods that would be useful to them in learning about the definitions and characteristics of an abusive sibling relationship. Quantitative studies could also be done in this area, in order to examine the beliefs and values of a large number of parents.

Other areas which would be interesting to explore would be examining the theory of learned helplessness in more detail. In the current study, it appears that learned helplessness plays a very pertinent role in the development of the negative effects that can occur as a result of being the victim of sibling abuse. Thus, this theory is deserving of more attention in future studies in order to confirm its role in the abusive relationship. The Cyclical Hypothesis of Abuse could also be examined, especially with regards to the continuance of abusive behavior in the perpetrator, extending from a sibling to a romantic partner in adulthood. It would also be interesting to explore whether being a victim of sibling maltreatment has any relation to the quality of one's relationships in adulthood. For example, Amy stated that she had been divorced after only a few short years of marriage. It has been suggested by previous researchers (Whipple & Finton, 1996; Wiehe, 1990) that those who are victims of abuse often play the victim role in other relationships. Thus, it would be interesting to examine the correlation between an abusive sibling relationship and problems in adult romantic relationships.

Conclusion

As I write these last words I realize that the journey I alluded to in the introductory chapter is coming to an end. I have come a very long way and have learned a great deal. Not only have I discovered the tremendous impact a sibling can have on one's development, but I have also learned of the extraordinary amount of courage and strength that many children have in order to push forth and prosper through adversity. Although the participants in this study represent only a fraction of all the abused siblings in the world, their stories speak loudly to me. They speak of the anger, sadness, and terror that filled their souls as children, and the disappointment and resentment that continues on into adulthood. They speak of broken dreams and fragmented families. They speak of the need to be heard and acknowledged for the endurance and determination they have carried with them for all these years. They speak, and I have listened.

Now that the voices have been heard, my hope is that others will become aware of the damage that can be caused by an abusive sibling. I wrote earlier that I hoped that my answers would become clearer as the journey continued. The stories provided by the participants make it clear to me that victims of sibling maltreatment feel very strongly about their experiences and believe that there were many negative ramifications of this maltreatment. Although these answers are poignant and meaningful, I do not pretend that they answer all of the questions. The point of this study was to explore the possibilities. I hope that the answers will persuade others to continue to explore the issues surrounding sibling maltreatment, so that all facets of the problem can be addressed. As stated by Dewey (1933), partial conclusions have been reached, and I hope this leads to much more in the future.

> ...partial conclusions emerge during the course of reflection. These are temporary stopping places, landings of past thought that are also stations of departure for subsequent thought. We do not reach "the" conclusion at a single jump...
>
> (p. 75, as cited in Muscola & Paget, 1994).

References

American Psychological Association. (1997). Childhood sibling abuse common, but most adults don't remember it that way, study finds [On-line]. Available: http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct97/abuse.html

Bank, S.P. & Kahn, M.D. (1982). The sibling bond. New York: Basic Books.

Becker, C. (1986). Interviewing in human science research. Methods, 1, 101-124.

Bennett, J.C. (1990). Nonintervention into siblings' fighting as a catalyst for learned helplessness. Psychological Reports, 66, 139-145.

Berger, A.A. (1997). Narratives in popular culture, media, and everyday life. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Brody, G.H. & Stoneman, Z. (1987). Sibling conflict: Contributions of the siblings themselves, the parent-sibling relationship, and the broader family system. Journal of Children in a Contemporary Society, 19, 39-53.

Brody, G.H., Stoneman, Z., McCoy, J.K., & Forehand, R. (1992). Contemporaneous and longitudinal associations of sibling conflict with family relationship assessments and family discussions about siblings' problems. Child Development, 63, 391-400.

Brody, G.H., Stoneman, Z., MacKinnon, C.E., & MacKinnon, R. (1985). Role relationships and behavior between preschool-aged and school-aged pairs. Developmental Psychology, 21, 124-129.

Bryant, B.K. (1992). Sibling caretaking: Providing emotional support during middle childhood. In F. Boer & J. Dunn (Eds.), Children's sibling relationships: Developmental and clinical issues (pp. 55-69). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Castiglia, P.T. (1989).Sibling rivalry. Journal of Pediatric Health Care, 3, 52-54.

Cicirelli, V.G. (1995). Sibling relationships across the life span. New York: Plenum Press.

Cortazzi, M. (1993). Narrative analysis. In R.G. Burgess (Series Ed.) Social Research and Educational Studies Series: 12. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press.

Crane, M.L. (1997). Childhood sibling abuse: A neglected form of maltreatment. Progress: Family Systems Research and Therapy [On-line] 6. Available: http://www.pgi.edu/prog6/mlcrane.html

Dunn, J. (1984). Sisters and brothers: The developing child. London, England: Fontana Paperbacks.

Dunn, J. (1988). Annotation: Sibling influences on childhood development. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 29, 119-127.

Dunn, J. & Munn, P. (1986). Sibling quarrels and maternal intervention: Individual differences in understanding and aggression. Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines, 27, 583-595.

Elias, M. (1997). Siblings' verbal abuse has lasting effects. USA Today: Health [On-line]. Available: http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/family/violence/lhfvi004.htm

Felson, R.B. (1983). Aggression and violence between siblings. Social Psychology Quarterly, 46, 271-285.

Furman, W. & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children's perceptions of the qualities of sibling relationships. Special Issue: Family development. Child Development, 56, 448-461.

Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P. (1996). Educational research: An introduction. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.

Gelles, R.J. & Cornell, C.P. (1985). Intimate violence in families. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Goodwin, M.P. & Roscoe, B. (1990). Sibling violence and agonistic interactions among middle adolescents. Adolescence, 25, 451-467.

Graham-Bermann, S.A. & Cutler, S.E. (1994). The brother-sister questionnaire: Psychometric assessment and discrimination of well-functioning from dysfunctional relationships. Journal of Family Psychology, 8, 224-238.

Graham-Bermann, S.A., Cutler, S.E., Litzenberger, B.W., & Schwartz, W.E. (1994). Perceived conflict and violence in childhood sibling relationships and later emotional adjustment. Journal of Family Psychology, 8, 85-97.

Green, A.H. (1984). Child abuse by siblings. Child Abuse & Neglect, 8, 311-317.

Gully, K.J., Dengerink, H.A., Pepping, M., & Bergstrom, D. (1981). Research note: Sibling contribution to violent behavior. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 43, 333-337.

Hermans, H.J.M. (1992). Telling and retelling one's self-narrative: A contextual approach to life-span development. Human Development, 35, 361-375.

Herzberger, S.D. (1996). Violence within the family: Social psychological perspectives. Toronto, Ontario: Brown & Benchmark Publishers.

Herzberger, S.D. & Hall, J.A. (1993). Consequences of retaliatory aggression against siblings and peers: Urban minority children's expectations. Child Development, 64, 1773-1785.

Josselson, R. (1996). Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Katz, L.F., Kramer, L., & Gottman, J.M. (1992). Conflict and emotions in marital, sibling, and peer relationships. In C.U. Shantz & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), Conflict in child and adolescent development (pp. 122-149). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14, 171-196.

Leonard, V.W. (1989). A Heideggerian phenomenologic perspective on the concept of the person. ANS: Advances in Nursing Science, 11, 40-55.

Leung, A.K.D. & Robson, L.M. (1991). Sibling rivalry. Clinical Pediatrics, 30, 314-316.

Loeber, R., Weissman, W., & Reid, J.B. (1983). Family interactions of assaultive adolescents, stealers, and nondelinquents. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 11, 1-14.

Mash, E.J. & Johnston, C. (1983). Sibling interactions of hyperactive and normal children and their relationship to reports of maternal stress and self-esteem. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 12, 91-99.

McKeever, P. (1983). Siblings of chronically ill children: A literature review with implications for research and practice. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 53, 209-217.

Montemayor, R. & Hanson, KE. (1985). A naturalistic view of conflict between adolescents and their parents and siblings. Special Issue: Contemporary approaches to the study of families with adolescents. Journal of Early Adolescence, 5, 23-30.

Muscola, D. & Paget, K. (1994). Narrative dialogue: A conversation between teacher and researchers. Hands On! [On-Line] 17 (2). Available: http://www.terc.edu/handson/f94/narrative.html

Newman, J. (1994). Conflict and friendship in sibling relationships: A review. Child Study Journal, 24, 119-152.

Ochberg, R.L. (1996). Interpreting life stories. In R. Josselson (Ed.) Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives (pp. 97-113). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Perry, D.G., Perry, C.P., & Kennedy, E. (1992). Conflict and the development of antisocial behavior. In C.U. Shantz & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), Conflict in child and adolescent development (pp. 301-329). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1988). Narrative knowing and the human sciences. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Prochaska, J.M. & Prochaska, J.O. (1985). Children's views of the causes and "cures" of sibling rivalry. Child Welfare, 64, 427-433.

Reid, W.J. & Donovan, T. (1990). Treating sibling violence. Family Therapy, 17, 49-59.

Riessman, C.K. (1993). Narrative analysis. In J.L. Hunter (Series Ed.)Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 30, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Roscoe, B., Goodwin, M.P., & Kennedy, D. (1987). Sibling violence and agonistic interactions experienced by early adolescents. Journal of Family Violence, 2, 121-137.

Rosenthal, P.A. & Doherty, M.B. (1984). Serious sibling abuse by preschool children. Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 23, 186-190.

Ross, H.S., Filyer, R.E., Lollis, S.P., & Perlman, M. (1994). Administering justice in the family. Special Section: Siblings, family relationships, and child development. Journal of Family Psychology, 8, 254-273.

Steinmetz, S.K. (1977). The cycle of violence: Assertive, aggressive, and abusive family interaction. New York: Praeger.

Steinmetz, S.K. (1978). Sibling violence. In J.M. Eskelaan & S.N. Katz (Eds.), Family violence: An international and disciplinary study (pp. 460-465). Toronto, Ontario: Butterworths.

Stillwell, R. & Dunn, J. (1985). Continuities in sibling relationships: Patterns of aggression and friendliness. Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines, 26, 627-637.

Stoneman, Z., Brody, G.H., & McKinnon, C. (1984). Naturalistic observations of children's activities and roles while playing with their siblings and friends. Child Development, 55, 617-627.

Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J., & Steinmetz, S.K. (1980). Behind closed doors: Violence in the american family. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Susko. (1994). Caseness and narrative. Journal of Mind and Behavior, 15, 87-112.

Vandell, D.L. & Bailey, M.D. (1992). Conflicts between siblings. In C.U. Shantz & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), Conflict in child and adolescent development (pp. 242-269). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Vespo, J.E., Pedersen, J., & Hay, D.F. (1995). Young children's conflicts with peers and siblings: Gender effects. Child Study Journal, 25, 189-212.

Volling, B.L. & Belsky, J. (1992). The contribution of mother-child and father-child relationships to the quality of sibling interaction: A longitudinal study. Child Development, 63, 1209-1222.

Walker, J.A. (1996). Learning to be interpretive: Hermeneutics and personal texts. Marriage and Family Review, 24, 223-239.

Walker, L.E. (1979). The battered woman. New York, New York: Harper & Row.

Whipple, E.E. & Finton, S.E. (1995). Psychological maltreatment by siblings: An unrecognized form of abuse. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 12, 135-146.

Wiehe, V.R. (1990). Sibling abuse: Hidden physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. Toronto, Ontario: Lexington Books.

Wilson, H.S. & Hutchinson, S.A. (1991). Triangulation of qualitative methods: Heideggerian hermeneutics and grounded theory. Qualitative Health Research, 1(2), 263-276.

Appendix I - Information Sheet

In this research project, I would like to learn about your experiences in interacting with your brother/sister. I would particularly like to know about the nature of any conflicts that you experienced as a young adolescent. I would like you to tell me about your experiences, as well as your feelings and perceptions of your brother or sister. This is an exploratory study, which means that this is an area that has not been examined very much in previous research. I am trying to learn as much as I can about both positive and negative aspects of the conflict in your sibling relationship, and would like you to tell me whatever you feel is relevant and important about your experiences.

There are three phases to this project. I may only ask you to participate in the first phase, which will take about half an hour to 45 minutes. This first phase will be used to discuss the project, your rights to confidentiality and anonymity, and your role as a participant. I will also ask you to sign a consent form, which will indicate that you are aware of your rights, and are a voluntary participant in the study. I will also ask you to fill out a brief questionnaire called the Conflict Tactics Scale.

I will be analysing the results of the questionnaire and choosing some of the respondents to go on to the interview phase of the study. Participants will be selected on the basis that I am trying to find a wide range of different experiences. Those participants who represent different types of sibling relationships will be requested to return for the interview. The interview will take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. Some of the questions may be personal and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You also may withdraw from the study at any time. The interview will be audiotaped so that it can be transcribed at a later date. The interview will be strictly confidential and will remain in the possession of myself or my supervisor. The audiotape and transcription will be destroyed when I am finished with my research in this area.

I understand that this interview may address some sensitive issues which you may want to continue to talk about with someone else. I will give you the names of a few counsellors who you might want to contact.

I will be using the transcript of the interview to write a story of your experiences with your sibling. After I have written the story, I will contact you so that we can meet again. At this meeting, you will be given an opportunity to read the narrative and make sure that it is true to your experience. This meeting is optional and you do not have to attend if you do not want to.

After the study is completed, I will be happy to let you read the completed project. If you are interested please phone me or send me an email.

I thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Tamara D. Hanoski
Counselling and School Psychology
University of Alberta

Dr. Gretchen Hess
Master's Thesis Supervisor
University of Alberta

Appendix II - Informed Consent Form

I, ______________________________, have volunteered to participate in a research project under the direction of Tamara D. Hanoski, a Master's student in Counselling and School Psychology at the University of Alberta, who is under the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Hess. I understand that this project is being done to explore sibling relationships, with a focus on the conflict that siblings experienced as children and/or adolescents. Some of the questions that I will be asked will be of a personal nature, and I understand that I have the right to omit any questions that I do not want to answer. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty whatsoever.

The purpose of the study and the tasks that I will be asked to perform have been outlined in the attached Information Sheet. I acknowledge that I have read this information and am aware of what is involved in this project. First, there is a questionnaire called the Conflict Tactics Scale that I will be asked to complete. Following this, I may be asked to return for an interview regarding my relationship with my brother/sister. It will be my choice as to whether I take part in the interview. If I do elect to participate in the interview, the researcher will use the information that I provide to create a story describing my experiences of sibling conflict.

I have been informed about my rights regarding confidentiality and anonymity, and am aware that the responses I provide in the Conflict Tactics Scale and during the interview will remain completely anonymous. No identifying information will be used for the transcription of the interview, nor in the write-up of the study. Any information I provide will remain confidential, and will be kept in the possession of the researcher or her supervisor. I consent to the audio/videotaping and transcription of the interview, with the understanding that the tape and transcription will be destroyed when the research in this area has been completed.

____
Signature

____
Date

____
Witness

____
Supervisor's Signature

Appendix III - Demographic Sheet

No. ______

Name ____

Address ____

____

Phone: Home ____________________ Email Address ______________

Work ____________________

Birthdate ____________________ Age ____________________

Faculty ____________________ Year of Study ______________

Number of Siblings ______________ Age of Sibling(s) ______________

Gender of Sibling(s) ______________ Sibling's Birthdate ______________

Age Gap With Sibling ______________

Name of Sibling (with whom you experienced the most conflict) ______________

Parent's Marital Status: Married _____ Separated _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____

If Separated or Divorced: Your Age at Separation/Divorce _______

With whom did you live? _________

If Widowed: Father _____ Mother _____

Your age at parent's death __________

Conflict Tactics Scale

In some families where there are children, the kids always seem to be having spats, fights, arguments, or whatever you want to call them; and they use many different ways of trying to settle differences between themselves. I'd like you to look at the following list of some things that your brother or sister might have done when he or she had an argument with you. Imagine that you are back in adolescence, to a time when you were about 12 or 13 years old. What was it like back then? How did your brother or sister handle conflicts with you when you were that age? For each of the behaviours listed below, I'd like you to tell me how often your brother or sister did each one when you were both in young adolescence. For each behaviour, I'd also like to know if there was another time (before you were 12 years old or after you reached 14) that your brother or sister did these behaviours.

My Brother or Sister:	When You Were 12 to 14 Years of Age								Happened Before Age 12 or After Age 14		
	Never	1	2	3-5	6-10	11-20	20+	?	Yes	No	Don't Know
a. Discussed the issue calmly	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
b. Got information to back up his/her side of things	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
c. Brought in someone to help settle things	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
d. Insulted or swore at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
e. Sulked or refused to talk about it	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
f. Stomped out of the room/house	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
g. Cried	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
h. Did/said something to spite me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
i. Threatened to hit or throw something at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
j. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
k. Threw something at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
l. Pushed, grabbed or shoved me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
m. Slapped or spanked me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
n. Kicked, bit, or hit me with a fist	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
o. Hit or tried to hit me with something	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
p. Beat me up	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
q. Threatened me with a knife or gun	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
r. Used a knife or gun on me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
s. Other ______________________	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

Appendix V - Interview Guide

Introduction: You have already filled out a survey on your sibling relationship. Now, I'm going to ask you some more questions about your brother/sister. I'd like you to think back to your sibling relationship in early adolescence, when you were between 12 and 14 years of age. What I'd really like to learn about is the conflict that you had with him/her, and how you felt about your sibling back then. If there are any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering, just let me know and we can skip over them.

- Tell me about your relationship with your brother/sister when you were 12 or 13 years old.
- Did you fight a lot?
- Describe a typical fight that you had with your brother/sister.
- Were your fights more verbal or physical?
- Was your brother/sister ever violent with you?
- Was he/she emotionally or verbally abusive towards you?
- Tell me how these fights made you feel.
- Tell me how you coped with these fights. Did you fight back? What sort of emotional reactions did you have?
- Tell me about your parents in all of this.
- How did you feel about the way your parents handled your fights? Did you feel that they understood what you were feeling?
- Did you wish your parents handled things differently?
- Did you learn anything from these experiences?
- What sort of impact do you think your sibling has had on your life? Do you think he/she had a positive or negative influence on you? In what ways was your relationship positive? Negative?
- If you had a magic wand to change the past, what would you change?
- What kind of relationship do you have with your brother/sister now, in the present?
- There are lots of definitions of abuse, and lots of talk about the term these days. What is your definition of abuse? Do you believe that the treatment that you received from your brother/sister was abusive?
- How does it make you feel to think back about your relationship with your brother/sister?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your relationship with your brother/sister?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me that is related to any of this?

Appendix VI - Corroborating Interview Letter

(Researcher's Address)

(Date)

(Participant's Address)

Dear _______________ :

I have finished writing your story and would like you to read it over and let me know if it is accurate. You can write right on the page any comments, changes, or additions you would like to make. If there is anything else you've remembered that you would like to add, you can send that back to me as well. I have enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope for you to send it back to me.

If there is anything you would like to discuss with me, my phone number is (phone number) or you can email me at (email address).

I look forward to hearing back from you and I hope your summer is going well!

Sincerely,

Tamara Hanoski

Appendix VII - Ethics Review Form

Department of Educational Psychology Ethics Review

Description of Project and Procedures for Observing Ethical Guidelines

PLEASE PROVIDE 2 COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT TO THE CHAIR, RESEARCH COMMITTEE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Project Title: Sibling Violence: An Exploratory Study of the Experiences of the Victims

Project Deadlines:

Date by which project approval is desired: November 15, 1997

Starting Date: December 1997 Ending Date: April, 1998

Applicant(s):

Principal Investigator: Tamara D. Hanoski

University Status: Masters of Education, 2nd Year

University Address: ____________

University Telephone: ____________

If the principal investigator is a student, please provide the following information:

If the research project is for a thesis or dissertation, has the applicant's Supervisory Committee approved the project? Yes: X No: ____

Name of Academic Advisor (or instructor if a course project)

Dr. Gretchen Hess

University Address: ____________

University Telephone: ____________

____________	____________	____________
Signature of Principal Investigator. In case of a graduate student, signature of faculty advisor.	Signature of Graduate Student (if applicable)	Date

Please describe the specific procedures to be used in observing ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. References to the SSHRC Guidelines for research using human subjects are cited below. Researchers should also familiarize themselves with the more detailed discussion in Annex H of the social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Research Grants: Guide for Applicants.* Some granting agencies adopt SSHRC guidelines, others have different guidelines that researchers must follow in making grant applications.

Statement of Research Problem and Methods:

(Attach copies of instruments, including tests, interview guides, observational forms, or sample items/questions. In the case of well-known instruments, names only need to be provided.)

Sibling violence is a very prevalent form of family violence that is largely neglected or ignored by most people. Many believe that sibling conflict is a natural and inevitable aspect of the sibling relationship. However, some authors have stated that such treatment may create developmental difficulties in the victims. This would include: low self-esteem, the development of learned helplessness, and feelings of anxiety and/or depression. It may also lead to an inability to form healthy relationships outside of the family, and may perpetuate the cycle of violence in one's future relationships.

Qualitative research has not yet been conducted in this area, and quantitative research has been very limited. Various aspects of sibling conflict have been examined in previous research, such as sibling rivalry, the role of parental intervention, and comparisons between sibling conflict and peer conflict. However, descriptions of the experience itself, as well as the feelings and perceptions of the victim, has not been examined. Thus, I would like to do an exploratory, qualitative study, using interviews to question people about their views on the physical and emotional maltreatment they experienced in their sibling relationships.

Participants will initially fill out the Conflict Tactics Scale (attached) in order to select participants whose sibling relationships had high levels of conflict and aggression. Those with the highest levels of violence (approximately 4 to 6 participants) will be asked to return for an interview, in order to look at the issues surrounding their sibling relationship in more detail. The interviews will be semi-structured and open ended, so that I can allow the participants to describe their experiences in their own words, and discuss the feelings and perceptions that they feel are important to them (see attached Interview Guide).

Who are the participants and how will they be involved in your research?

The participants will be undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. I will post signs on bulletin boards throughout the Education Building in order to find people who would be interested in participating in the study. I will be looking for students between the ages of 18 and 22, and will ask them to reflect back on their sibling relationships in early adolescence (age 12 to 14), as this age has been examined in very few of the previous studies. I would like participants of either gender, who are the younger sibling of a sibling dyad, with no more than a 4 year age gap between them. Participants will initially be asked to fill out the Conflict Tactics Scale, and will be told that they may be contacted for an interview in the future. Based on the results of the scale, 4 to 6 participants will be selected to take part in an in-depth interview about their experiences with sibling violence and/or emotional maltreatment.

After transcribing the interviews, I will be using the narrative method to create stories of the experiences of the participants. I would like to develop a full picture, or story, of what the participants have told me in the interview. Participants will be contacted to read then narratives, in order to ensure that I have described their experiences accurately.

How will the nature and purpose of the research be explained to participants?
"Certain individual or collective 'rights' must be maintained. These include the right to know the precise nature and purpose of the research, so that consent may be given or withheld advisedly..." (#8, p.27)

Prior to completing the Conflicts Tactics Scale, participants will be told that they will be given a survey, which will ask them questions about their sibling relationships, with an emphasis on the conflict that they experienced with their sibling in young adolescence. The participants who will be interviewed will be given an information sheet, which will describe the purpose of the study, as well as how they will be involved in the project (please see attached Information Sheet).

How will informed consent of participants be obtained?
"Informed consent should be obtained in writing. Where this is not practical, the procedures used in obtaining consent should be on record." (#14,p.28)
"Written consent should set out: a) purpose of the research; b) benefits envisaged; c)any inconveniences; d)tasks to be performed; e) rights of the subject, e.g. the right to withdraw without penalty, the right to confidentiality of personal information; f) risks involved; g) the name(s) of the person(s), group(s) or institution(s) eliciting or receiving the consent." (#15, p.28)
Please attach copies of all consent forms to be used.

Informed consent of the participants will be obtained by the use of an "Informed Consent Form", which will provide all of the information outlined above (please see attached Informed Consent Form).

Are children, captive or dependent populations used? ___X___ No _____ Yes. If so, detail how consent will be obtained.
"Informed consent of parents or guardian and, where practical, of children should be obtained in research involving children...."(#12, p.28)
" 'Captive and dependent populations' are individuals or groups in a relationship where a power differential could operate to their disadvantage as subjects: for example, students, minors, prisoners, employees, military personnel, incapacitated people and the socially deprived....In addition to consent of the subjects themselves, informed consent of the authorities should be obtained....Captive subjects should always have the right and power to veto others' consent. (Intro. And #33, p.29)
Please attach copies of all consent to be used.

Not applicable.

How will provision be made for exercising the right to opt out at any time?
"Participants should understand that they may withdraw at any time, just as investigators may terminate their research in the interest of the subjects, the project or themselves." (#11, p.28)

The right to opt out at any time will be stated on the Informed Consent Form (attached). Participants will also be told verbally that if they wish to omit any questions during the interview or withdraw from the study at any time, they are free to do so.

How will confidentiality and anonymity be maintained?
"There should be a clear understanding between the investigator and subjects as to what extent information they divulge will be kept confidential in the original use of data and their deposit for future

use....Unless there is an explicit statement by the researcher to the contrary, to which the subject agrees, personal information given by the subject will be confidential and the researcher will explain steps to be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity." (#28,29, p.29)

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained in several ways. When filling out the Conflict Tactics Scale, each participant will be given a demographics sheet, as well as the Conflict Tactics Scale. Each participant will be assigned a number, which will be written at the top of both the demographics sheet and the scale. When handing in the completed Conflict Tactics Scale, the demographics sheet will be separated from it, so that no identifying information will be found in connection with the completed Tactics Scale. When contacting participants to be interviewed, the number on the Conflict Tactics Scale can be matched to its pair on the demographics sheet, in order to have the information that is needed to contact the participants. Anonymity will also be maintained in the interviews by asking each of the participants to give themselves a pseudonym, which will be used in place of their real names for data analysis and the writing of the narratives.

Interviews will be either audio or videotaped, and the tapes will be kept in my possession. Participants will be informed that I will be the only person who will be listening or viewing the tapes. Furthermore, the tapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed. I will ensure that no identifying information is found on the transcripts, and I will use the pseudonym that the participants have chosen for themselves in both the transcripts and the narratives. The transcripts will also be destroyed when the study is completed.

Is deception and/or risk involved in the project? _____ No __X__ Yes. If so, how will the interests of the subjects be protected?

"Deception is a situation in which subjects have essential information withheld and/or are intentionally misled about procedures and purposes....(and should only be used when) ...a) significant advance could result; and b) no other methodology would suffice.., Deception should never be permitted when there is risk of harm to the subject or when it is not possible to advise subjects subsequently as to the reasons why the deception was necessary." (Intro.,#18, 17, p.28)

"The onus is on the researcher to avoid or minimize risks to subjects both in carrying out the research and in publication of the results.... Except where there is clear foreseeable benefit to the participant, such as in therapeutic research, the researcher has no right to attempt to make long-term changes in a person's behavior or attitudes." (#23, 21, p.28)

Deception will not be involved in this project. However, there may be some risk involved, as some of the questions may be of a highly personal nature and may bring out strong emotions in the participants. Participants will be advised of the nature of the questions, and will be told that they may omit any questions that they would prefer not to answer. I will also give them several referrals to counselling agencies, so that if issues are triggered during the interviews, they will have the option to explore these issues further.

Are there any other procedures relevant to your observation of the ethical guidelines that are not described above? If so, please describe them and discuss how you intend to ensure that no ethical problems develop.

I have several friends who are undergraduates in the Faculty of Education, and I will have to ensure that they are not included in the study, as having them as participants would be a dual relationship.